



A
DEVOTIONAL LIFE
OF
OUR LORD

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A

DEVOTIONAL LIFE
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

BY THE ✓

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PREFACE.

HAT the writer has proposed to himself in this work is not a d tailed Narrative of all that our Blessed Lord did and said, so much as a series of studies of His Person, Character, and Work.

The endeavour has been made to impress vividly on the reader's mind that Jesus was a real historical person, perfectly human in character and natural in life; and, at the same time, never to suffer him to lose sight of the great truth that Jesus was very God; and to call attention to the relation of the two Natures in the one Person of the Christ. The endeavour has been made to direct attention not only to the invisible side of the Saviour's work in its relations with God and with the human soul, but also to the human side of His work in the establishment of a kingdom on earth as His agency for carrying out the work of the salvation of men.

It has been necessary, for these ends, to consider in some detail all which the Gospel tells us of the Divine Infancy, Childhood, and Youth, and also all which it tells us of the closing scenes of the Divine life. But it has been thought sufficient to summarise the events of the Ministry, dwelling only on such features of it as seemed necessary to the main purpose of the work. This has been done partly for the sake of reducing the size of the book, and partly in order to present in fewer traits, and therefore more easily grasped at one view, what is intended to be a Portrait rather than a Biography.

The sacred subject has been approached with hesitation, humility, and reverence. Undertaken in the first instance for the writer's own edification, then wrought out in a series of Sermons, then digested into the present form, in the hope, and with the prayer, that it might help others to form to themselves a more vivid knowledge of our Blessed Lord, and so to love Him with a more enthusiastic loyalty, to trust Him with an unhesitating confidence, to live to Him with an entire self-devotion.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE	<i>Page</i>	iii
ST. JOHN'S PROLOGUE... ..		4

PART I.

THE CHILDHOOD AND OBSCURE LIFE.

CHAP.

1. THE ANGEL IN THE TEMPLE	9
2. THE INCARNATION	23
3. THE VISITATION	31
4. "IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS"	44
5. THE NATIVITY	55
6. THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS	59
7. THE CIRCUMCISION	63
8. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE	68
9. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI... ..	80
10. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS	89
11. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT	93
12. THE HOLY CHILDHOOD	96
13. THE "SON OF THE LAW"	104
14. THE OBSCURE LIFE	114
15. "HE WAS SUBJECT UNTO THEM"	121
16. HIS GROWTH INTO MANHOOD	127

PART II.

THE PREPARATION.

CHAP.

17.	THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF TIBERIUS CÆSAR	<i>Page</i>	137
18.	THE FORERUNNER	... ..	163

PART III.

THE MINISTRY.

19.	THE BAPTISM	... ..	170
20.	THE GREAT FAST	... ..	180
21.	THE TEMPTATION	... ..	184
22.	THE FIRST DAYS OF THE MINISTRY	... ..	197
23.	THE FIRST MIRACLE	... ..	201
24.	THE SON OF MAN	... ..	208
25.	THE HOLY CITY	... ..	219
26.	LANDMARKS OF THE MINISTRY	... ..	230
27.	SUMMARY OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	... ..	234
28.	THE MIRACLES	... ..	254
29.	THE CONFESSION OF THE DIVINITY	... ..	262
30.	THE SON OF GOD	... ..	274
31.	THE TRANSFIGURATION	... ..	281
32.	THE JUDÆAN MINISTRY	... ..	288
33.	THE WORDS OF JESUS	... ..	299
34.	“BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE”	... ..	307
35.	THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	... ..	317

PART IV.

THE PASSION AND DEATH.

CHAP.		<i>Page</i>
36.	THE HOLY WEEK	337
37.	THE LAST SUPPER	369
38.	THE PASSION	392
39.	THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS	430
40.	THE CRUCIFIED	459
41.	THE BURIAL	468

PART V.

THE RISEN LIFE.

42.	THE RESURRECTION. THE APPEARANCES	473
43.	THE RISEN LIFE	539
44.	THE ASCENSION	547

A DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF OUR LORD.



THE PROLOGUE.

THERE are two ways of writing a life of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Like St. Luke, to begin with the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, and to let his life and character and work gradually develope themselves, until the reader is constrained, with the Apostles, to recognize him as the Son of God; and to continue the narrative until the Gift of Pentecost reveals the fulfilled work of Christ in the restoration to mankind of in-dwelling Deity. Or, like St. John, to go back to the pre-existence of the Divine Person, who took upon Him our nature of the substance of the Virgin Mother, to assume from the first days our completed knowledge of his work, and to make full use of this knowledge in our study of all the incidents of the history.

The latter method will best serve the purpose of the devout contemplation of the Person and work of Jesus, which is proposed in the following pages; and the proper Prologue to such an under-

taking is that which St. John himself has prefixed to his Gospel:—

“ In the beginning was the Word :

“ And the Word was with God :

“ And the Word was God.

“ The same was in the beginning with God.

“ All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

“ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

“ And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. . . .

“ He was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

“ He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

“ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

“ But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God

“ And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”

“In the beginning.” They are the same words with which Moses, in the book of Genesis, commences the history of the creation of the world :—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Moses carries us back into the period before any created thing or being—man or world or angel—existed ; into that inconceivable eternity in which God lived alone ; into that unbounded abyss, unbroken yet by sun or star, which was not therefore dark and void, but filled everywhere with the splendour of the presence of God.

Of all the rest of the sons of men without exception it may be asserted that they had no existence before they were conceived and born into this world ; but John asserts the pre-existence of Jesus ; and he does not date back his pre-existence to any definite period when it began ; but he carries us back to that period of which Moses spake, beyond the beginning of all things which had a beginning ; and he asserts that then, already, Christ existed : “In the beginning was the Word.”

But since in that eternity God lived alone, where was there place for the existence of the Word ? The Evangelist answers, though God lived alone, “the Word was with God.” The Word was with God not as a separate Being outside the Godhead, for he adds “the Word was God.” It is the mystery of the Trinity of Being in the Unity of the Godhead, which

is thus brought before us. The Word is the second person of the ever blessed Trinity.

Not only was the Word in the beginning, before creation began, but creation was His work: "All things were made by Him"; all created things without exception, animate and inanimate, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers: "Without Him was not anything made that was made."

"In Him was Life." As he himself explains, "as the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He is the source of life to living beings. "And the Life was the Light of men." "He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" the source of light to all men, of intellectual light, of spiritual light, the light of reason and of conscience, the light of revelation.

"He was in the world;" "He came unto His own;" He left "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was;" He "came forth from the Father and came into the world," and "the world knew Him not;" "His own received Him not." The Evangelist anticipates in his prologue the perplexing fact of the history that His own world (regarding the facts in a broad general way) did not recognise Him when He came, His own creatures did not receive Him.

And St. John sums up what he has said in the

words "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." A mere commonplace to those who have known it all their lives, and never thought about it ; the most august and glorious truth of all truths which affect the human race, to those who realize its meaning ; God entered into our humanity, God became man, God dwelt among men.

"And we" who believed in Him "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Epiphany of God Incarnate was not in the splendour of a descent from heaven, surrounded by shining hosts, in the sight of gazing mankind. It was in the humility and weakness of the birth at Bethlehem. The redemption of man from sin and death was not by an exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy, but by the suffering of the penalty of sin upon the cross. The glory which they beheld who gazed upon the Person and Life of Incarnate God was the glory of "grace and truth."

Most of us, it is to be feared, are too much in the state of spiritual development in which the Jews were in our Lord's time, profoundly impressed by physical might and material splendour, idolizing intellectual clearness, and depth, and vigour, so that a combination of them would be the fulfilment of our highest conceptions of a Divine Incarnation. We have, most of us, hardly caught a glimpse of the superiority of the spiritual over the intellectual

and the physical. We need to lay seriously to heart at the beginning of our study of the person and life of the Lord and Saviour that the revelation which God gives of Himself in Christ is not a sudden flashing forth of splendour and power, but the slow dawning of grace and truth, displayed in the daily course of a human life. Therefore it was that "the Light shined in the darkness and the darkness" of man's dulled spiritual apprehension "comprehended it not."

Let us take care, in our present study of His Person, and character, and work, that we do not fall into the same blindness, and fail to understand the glory which consists in the fulness of grace and truth.

He did not by a mere act of creative power make all men Sons of God; but to them that received him and "believed in Him, to them He gave power," through a spiritual regeneration "to become the Sons of God."

The keenest intellect fails to explain to itself, the profoundest spiritual insight into the things of God fails to divine, the *way* in which the human nature is united with the divine nature, in the person of Jesus: any more than "the spirit of a man which knows the things of a man," can explain the way in which the material body and the immaterial soul are united in one man.

The union of the human and divine natures in

Jesus is a mystery. The fact is revealed to us, but not the "how." We accept the fact as a revelation. What we have to do is to apprehend clearly and accurately what it is which God has revealed on the subject, and to hold it fast.

We have also in our studies of the subject to take care to avoid the various erroneous ways of conceiving the mystery which have suggested themselves, and naturally suggest themselves, to men's minds, and which have been declared to be unsound. It may be useful briefly to enumerate the chief of these errors:—

1. The failure to realise the true and complete humanity of Jesus.
2. The failure to realise the true and consubstantial deity of Jesus.
3. To think of the union of the two natures as if they were fused into one mixed nature which is neither human nor divine.
4. To think of Jesus as two persons, a man in whom God was pleased to dwell.

The truth as opposed to these errors is that God the Son, the second person of the blessed Trinity, assumed human nature to Himself, so that two whole and perfect natures,—that is to say, the Divine nature and the human nature,—stand side by side, not mixed together, but intimately united, and never to be divided again, in one person. And the personality

of Jesus is to be found in the divine nature. The divine person took human nature to himself without adding a human person to himself, as a human soul at the resurrection may be conceived to take a material body to itself, without adding another self to itself.

In all the great crises of the history we shall find ourselves face to face with this great mystery, and shall do well to study it again and again, that we may the more fully enter into the blessed truth, which is thus announced on the threshold, **THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US.**

PART I.—THE CHILDHOOD.



CHAPTER I.

THE ANGEL IN THE TEMPLE.

HE grey dawn appears first in the heavens ; then the distant snow peak glows with rosy light ; lastly, the sun rises over the eastern hill and slowly fills the land with Day. So the rising of the Sun of Righteousness has its premonitions.

The Gospel history opens amidst the sacred splendours of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, with the supernatural glory of an angelic apparition, bringing a divine revelation that the New Dispensation is about to appear.

If we desire to realise vividly not only this grand opening scene, but also many subsequent scenes, of the history, we shall do well to take some pains to make ourselves acquainted with at least the broad features of the architecture of the Temple and the Ritual of its worship.

It was an age of architectural magnificence. The Greek sovereigns of Syria and Egypt had studded

the countries round about Palestine with new cities planned on a scale of extraordinary grandeur—the main streets bordered in their whole length with colonnades of great splendour, large public places surrounded with colonnades, magnificent temples, and public buildings. Herod the Great had acquired this taste for magnificence, and, desiring to ingratiate himself with his subjects, had beautified Jerusalem with public buildings, and rebuilt the Temple,¹ enlarging its precincts, and surrounding it with cloisters, on a scale of magnitude and sumptuousness which made the whole group of buildings one of the most costly and splendid architectural achievements of the ancient world.

The situation of the Temple greatly assisted its general effect. Jerusalem is situated on a projection of table land surrounded on three sides by deep and narrow gorges,—the Valley of Kedron on the east, the Valley of Hinnom, which sweeps round the western and southern sides, and joins the Kedron valley at the south-east corner of the site; this platform is again divided by the Tyropœan valley into two irregular and unequal portions, the larger, Mount Zion, on the west, the site of the ancient city of

¹ Probably it was the surrounding buildings of the Temple which were rebuilt by Herod, while the central and most sacred portion containing the Holy Place and Most Holy Place were added to and adorned.

David, and the lesser, Mount Moriah, on the east, the site of Arannah's threshing-floor outside the ancient city, where the destroying angel was stayed, where David offered his thanksgiving sacrifice, and which he therefore adopted as the site of the Temple.

This eastern hill, then, was bounded on the east and south by the precipitous sides of the valleys of Kedron and Hinnom, and the Tyropœan valley separated it from the city on the west; on the north an artificial trench, excavated in the rock from valley to valley, isolated the Temple site from the rest of the hill, and on this side the strong palace-fortress of Antonia, based on a precipitous rock, 75 feet high, defended and dominated it. Herod had enlarged the natural available area on the south by vast substructures faced with enormous blocks of stone. So that the Temple stood isolated on its rocky platform close by, and yet apart from, the city. The walls which enclosed it seemed to grow out of the natural rock and rise sheer out of the depths of the surrounding valleys in stately strength.

The enlarged area included by Herod in the Temple precincts was in all probability identical with the Haram area of the modern city. This area is irregular in shape, its mean measurement being 982 feet from east to west, and 1,565 feet from north to south, including 35 acres, about four times the area of Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was enclosed

by walls 40 feet high, of vast thickness, built of immense blocks of white marble. Internally the enclosure was surrounded by cloisters or porticos, intended not only for ornament, but also to give large spaces of shade from the heat and glare of the eastern sun. On three sides, viz. the west, north, and east, these cloisters were formed of double rows of marble Corinthian columns 37 feet 6 inches high. The cloister on the south side was called the Royal Portico, because at its western end a bridge thrown across the Tyropœan connected it with the ancient palace on the western hill. This royal entrance was enlarged into a vast hall consisting of a body and aisles 600 feet long and 100 feet wide, formed of four rows of polished white marble columns, forty in each row, each formed of a single stone 40 feet high, with gilded Corinthian capitals; the aisles were 40 feet high, and the centre 100 feet, ceiled with carved and gilded beams of cedar, the floor paved with coloured marbles. It may give a measure of this magnificent portico to say that it was 100 feet longer than York Minster, and rather wider than its nave and aisles. These cloisters as a whole were a magnificent work. There are remains of similar colonnades of the same style which may help us to realise the architectural effect. The double columns of the porticos of the Parthenon at Athens are but 34 feet in height, and may help us to

realise the grand height of the Temple cloisters ; the broken lines of columns which still remain at Palmyra may help us to picture the effect of the long double colonnades of the vast quadrangle of the Temple.

Within this area was formed an inner court, situated centrally between the north and south sides, but a third nearer to the west than the east. This situation of the inner court was dictated by the natural formation of the hill, which here rose to its highest point, and this natural rise offered the opportunity to give to the inner court an increased dignity by constructing it on a platform elevated 22 feet 6 inches above the area round about it. The external appearance of the inner court was that of a strong building, about 500 feet square, enclosed by a high wall of white marble ornamented with sculptures on its external face. Three lofty gates of highly ornamental design gave entrance to it on the north and three on the south ; the one eastern gate—the Beautiful Gate—was one of the most magnificent portions of the whole building, faced with Corinthian brass, the leaves of its great doors covered with thick plates of gold and silver. Broad stairs of white marble gave access from the outer court through these gates to the inner court. The level platform of the inner court was paved with marble, and surrounded with a cloister of single marble columns.

Towards the western side of the inner court the

apex of the hill afforded another platform elevated 9 feet above its marble pavement, for the basis of the central and most sacred portion of the Temple, viz., the roofed building which contained the Holy and Most Holy Places. The apartments themselves were of comparatively small dimensions, the outer holy place 60 feet by 30 feet, and the inner and most sacred place a cube of 30 feet by 30 feet, and 30 feet high ; and both these chambers were lined with plates of gold. But according to the measurements given by Josephus, the external dimensions of this building had been increased by the addition of chambers at the sides, and a lofty façade 150 feet in width and height, ornamented with thick plates of gold. An arch 60 feet high occupied the centre, and formed the entrance, closed by its thick veil of "blue and purple and fine linen and scarlet," and ascended by a flight of twelve broad marble steps.

In the middle of the inner court, in front of the entrance to the holy place, stood the altar of Burnt Sacrifice, a great structure of unhewn stones, 75 feet square, and 22 feet 6 inches high, whence the charcoal fire kept always burning sent up its thin blue wreath of smoke into the sky. A low marble wall 4 feet 6 inches high fenced in the portion of the court around the altar and the Temple to keep it clear for the ministering priests and Levites. The remainder of the inner court was the court of the Israelites ; the women's court was

at the east end. A low wall surrounded the inner court a little way from the bottom of the stairs, and marked out the limits beyond which none but a son of Abraham might approach, but the remainder of the great outer court was open to Gentiles also.

The outer haram area has now,—and possibly the outer court of the Temple formerly had,—a profusion of trees, olive, acacia, and cypress, assuming the density of a grove under the eastern wall; and beneath their shade the people of modern Jerusalem delight to rest. The contrast of the varied foliage with the stately white colonnades around the court, and the magnificent architectural group which rose in the midst, and the blue sky above, would add to the general beauty of the scene. If one of our cathedral closes with its ancient elms were surrounded by a vast cloister it might give us some idea of the combination. This grand group of buildings was seen to the greatest advantage when looked down upon from the opposite heights of Mount Olivet. Thence the site appeared no longer as a projecting neck of table-land, but as “Mount Moriah” rising with precipitous sides out of the depths of Kedron. The eye could see over the outer wall into the court and catch glimpses of its cloister, could see the inner court on its raised platform, and the Temple itself rising out of the midst of the group and crowning the white marble substructures with its golden roofs and

gates. Josephus¹ says "it appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow, for as to those parts of it that were not gilt they were exceeding white," while the plates of gold, which covered the whole vast front of the holy place and its roof, "at the first rising of the sun reflected back a very fiery splendour, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it turn their eyes away, just as they would have done from the sun's own rays."

The Gospel history opens at the time of the evening sacrifice. The ritual of the evening worship consisted of three portions, the Burnt offering, the Vocal worship of the Levite choir, and the offering of the Incense in the Sanctuary. On the evening on which the history opens the Lamb had been slain, its blood sprinkled upon the altar, and its members laid upon the fire upon the altar, while the priests sounded the silver trumpets. The preparation for the offering of the incense had been made. The people had been as usual cleared away from between the porch and the brazen altar, and the Levites removed from between the altar and the holy place, so that all might see the subsequent ceremony. The Levite choir had formed into semi-choirs on

¹ "Wars," book v., chap. 5.

each side of the altar, the musicians bearing their instruments. Then the ceremony began as usual. One priest ascended the steps, and lifting the corner of the great veil entered the holy place to fetch away from the golden altar the ashes of the morning incense. Another took the golden censer which hung at the horn of the brazen altar and filled it with live charcoal from the pure consecrated fire maintained at the south-east corner of the altar ; and then he also entered within the veil to place the live coals on the altar of incense for the new offering. Meanwhile a Levite had brought out from the chamber of the Temple in which the incense was prepared and stored, a covered golden vessel containing a portion of it. The priest to whom the honour had fallen by lot of making the actual offering took the allotted quantity on a golden salver, and entered within the veil. A moment after the Prefect of the Temple, who presided over the sacrifices, sounded the signal for the offering.

The people could not see into the holy place, so as to witness the actual offering ; but all knew well what was behind the veil, and in what the ceremony of the offering consisted.

In the Holy Place was the golden table on the right hand bearing the twelve loaves of the Shew bread. On the left the tall seven-branched golden candlestick, with its seven lamps burning. In front, before the second veil which screened the entrance into the

Most Holy place, stood the golden altar of incense with the fire already burning on it.

The priest's duty was to pour the incense from his salver upon the live coals, and as the fragrant cloud rose and spread through the house, to retire slowly backward with an obeisance to the Divine Presence secluded within the dark¹ mysterious solitude of the Most Holy Place. Then, having emerged again from behind the veil, his duty was to turn to the people, and standing there on the top of the flight of twelve steps, framed within the lofty golden doorway, with the veil of blue and fine linen and scarlet and purple forming a rich background to his simple white robes, to lift his hands, while the people knelt before him on the marble pavement, and to pronounce the solemn blessing which God had commanded :—

“ The Lord Bless you and Keep you.

“ The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

“ The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Then the Levite choir burst forth with the chanting of the evening Psalms.

On this evening the priest entered the Holy place, and the people outside waited for his reappearance ;

¹ The second Temple is said to have lacked the Shekinah, the luminous appearance over the Mercy Seat which in the first Temple formed the visible symbol of God's presence.

the Levite musicians handled their harps, and the people watched in breathless silence, ready to prostrate themselves to receive the Blessing. But he did not come. It was his duty not to delay, lest the people should fear that he had been struck dead for some failure in his office. But minute after minute passed and he did not come. At length, after a time which seemed long to the anxious spectators, he came hastily forth with marks of agitation, and instead of giving the usual blessing, he made signs to them that he had seen a vision in the Holy Place, and had been struck speechless. Perhaps he gave the blessing in dumb show, with extended hands, and the service concluded as usual, and the worshippers dispersed to wonder at the portent.

This was what had happened within the veil. The priest to whom had fallen by lot to offer the incense was named Zacharias ; and his wife, who was also of the sacred family, was named Elizabeth. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years."

When Zacharias had entered into the Holy Place to offer the incense, "there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense," and when Zacharias saw him he was troubled

and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." We infer that the aged priest had not ceased to hope and pray for offspring, and perhaps at this holiest time, when his office permitted him to stand before the presence of God and minister before Him, he had taken the opportunity again to prefer his request:—"Thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son." Then the angel went on to declare the great destiny which awaited the child. "Thou shalt call his name John, and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord:" *i.e.*, he shall be a Nazarite, filled from his birth with the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets of old; a great religious reformer; the forerunner of the Messiah predicted by Malachi in the last words of ancient prophecy.¹ Thus the spirit of prophecy in

¹ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."—Malachi iv. 5, 6.

breaking its long silence of 300 years, takes up in the first words of the new revelation the last words of the old, and binds them into a continuous revelation.

Zacharias, troubled and awed by the unexpected apparition, with the natural slowness of age to believe in any departure from the common order, expressed his doubt:—

“Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years.”

And the angel answered in words which make us think that angels may feel some sense of offended dignity:—

“I am Gabriel, that stand in the Presence of God,” one of the most honoured and trusted of the servants of the Great King, “and I am sent (by God) to speak unto thee and to shew thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”¹

And so it was that the priest emerged from behind the veil agitated and unable to speak the Evening Benediction.

¹ It is said “of Abraham, when he was promised a son in his old age, that, being not weak in faith . . . he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief” (Rom. iv. 19, 20). Zacharias was weak in faith and staggered at the promise, and asked for confirmation of it.

What a splendid opening of the Gospel ! What a striking scene of earthly magnificence and supernatural glory ! The material magnificence of the chamber—with its walls and ceiling and furniture of gold, lighted by the mild radiance of the seven sacred lamps ; the sacredness of the place—divided only by a curtain from the mercy-seat on which dwelt the special presence of God ; the awe of the sudden apparition of the glorious angel, as if he had stepped suddenly from behind the second veil ; the aged priest in his white robe in the midst of this splendour and awe, receiving the first words of the new revelation of God to man—the proclamation of the speedy advent of the long-promised Messiah, and the announcement that the son to be born to him out of due time should be the Herald of the Christ.

The grey dawn had appeared in the sky.

A brief paragraph tells us that as soon as the days of his official ministrations were accomplished Zacharias departed to his own house, somewhere in the hill country of Judea ; perhaps in the Levitical city of Hebron. “ And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself,” and the knowledge of her state, “ for five months, saying, thus hath the Lord dealt with me to take away my reproach among men.”

CHAPTER II.

THE INCARNATION.

HE history opened amid the splendour and awe of the Temple of God in Jerusalem and the solemnities of the Evening Sacrifice. Its second scene, with dramatic contrast, is laid in a maiden's chamber in a cottage of a mountain village among the hills of Galilee.

The part of Galilee, north of the great plain of Esdraelon, is a region of hills, for the most part green and wooded. One of their features is the upland valleys of fertile soil and pleasant climate which usually lie just below their highest summits. The valley of Nazareth is one of these upland hollows, surrounded by gently rounded heights. On one of its slopes, half concealed among groves and gardens, are the flat-roofed white houses of the modern village which represents the ancient Nazareth. It was an obscure village unnamed in the Old Testament, unnoted at the time of the beginning of the New Testament.

In the spring time the sloping hill sides which

enclose the valley are green with grass and studded with the bright flowers which abound in the Syrian fields; the fertile bottom of the valley is cultivated and covered with crops; shaded by broad-leaved fig-trees, and olive-trees with twisted trunks and white under-leaves; gay with scarlet blossoms of pomegranate. The flocks dot the hill sides, wild pigeons coo among the garden trees, and the peasants work cheerfully among their vines. The village well, outside the village, is frequented, morning and evening, by groups of women, who talk and laugh while they leisurely fill their tall water-jars of classic shape, then poise the elegant burden on their heads, and, with upright figure and elastic step, return through the village street to their humble homes. The country, the village, the village life, have changed but little in all these centuries.

In the days of which the Gospel speaks, among these lowly villagers of Nazareth, not distinguished from the rest, like them fulfilling all the duties of a humble household, fetching water from the well morning and evening like the rest, is a young maiden; already at an early age, according to the custom of the East, betrothed to a kinsman of mature age, and like station, a carpenter in the village. The maiden, Mary, is pure and sweet, and thoughtful and gentle, with a latent grandeur of character which future

events will develope, and a wondrous destiny, which was now about to be accomplished. Joseph was calm and good and kindly. They were peasants, and contented in their peasant life; yet the care with which Jews preserved their genealogies left no doubt that they were descended from the ancient royal house of Judah,—they were “of the house and lineage of David.”

In all this preliminary description we have been taking pains to get our minds fully and strongly impressed with the historic truth and every-day reality of the scene and persons; for the next step in the history carries us at once into the sphere of the supernatural, which, indeed, is always about us, though so seldom manifested.

The Christian imagination of the Middle Ages, endeavouring to realize the scene of the Annunciation, has almost uniformly placed Mary in the solitude of the chamber of her cottage home, and with a beautiful instinct of piety has represented her as kneeling in prayer, when the chamber is suddenly filled “with brightness and perfume,” and the startled maiden looking up sees the “majestic grace” of the Archangel Gabriel standing before her, the same Divine messenger who lately had appeared to the aged priest Zacharias in the Holy Place of the Temple.

He thus addressed her :—

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured :¹ the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women.”

She, amazed at the glorious apparition, and considering in her mind the meaning of his words remained silent.

The angel gently reassured her :—

“Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God.” And then he made the wondrous announcement which he had been sent from heaven to make to the shrinking maiden :—

“Behold thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.

“And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.

“And of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

We are told that every Hebrew woman for ages past had cherished in her heart the sublime hope that she perhaps might prove to be the mother or the ancestress of the Messiah ; much more must every woman of the house of David have indulged this hope ; and the hope must have been intensified at

¹ Or “graciously accepted,” marginal reading.

this period by the general expectation which prevailed that the time was ripe for the Messiah's coming. All who were "looking for redemption in Israel" were familiar with the ancient prophecies¹ relating to the Messiah, and the allusions to them in the message of Gabriel would be at once recognised by the pious and thoughtful Mary. So that the announcement would be intelligible to Mary, and the thought not altogether strange to her, that the hope of the Hebrew women was to be fulfilled to her; that she was the daughter of Eve, of Abraham, of David, whom God had chosen for this great destiny.

But how could it be? It was probably some natural shrinking of maiden modesty which dictated the question:—

"How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man."

And the angel said:—

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Moreover, for her assurance, and for a sign to her, he told her of the supernatural conception of Elizabeth.

"Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also con-

¹ See note at the end of this chapter.

ceived a son in her old age ; for with God nothing shall be impossible.”

We saw in the case of the annunciation to Zacharias that it was possible that he had been praying for a child since the angel's opening words are, “Thy prayer is heard, and thou shalt have a son” ; so here again it is possible that Mary had been praying the common prayer of Hebrew women, for the angel's opening words are “Hail thou that art graciously accepted.” At least, if she had not prayed for it, this high destiny was not thrust upon her, without reference to her willingness. It was offered to her, and she humbly and trustingly accepted it :—

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.”

“And the angel departed from her ;” the brightness of his presence faded into the dim light of the common day, and the lonely chamber resumed its usual homely aspect. But what a tremendous result remained, to Mary and to the world : The Holy Spirit the Lord and Giver of all life, had created a new germ of human life within her. Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost.” “The Word was made flesh.”

God had become incarnate.

The snow peak glowed with rosy light.

NOTE.

The following are some of the prophecies alluded to at page 27 :—

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come” (Gen. xlix. 10).

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” (Dan. ix. 24).

The prophecy is probably dated from the seventh year of Artaxerxes, when he made his decree and wrote the letter to Ezra (vii. 11), from which period to the passion of our Lord was exactly 490 (seventy weeks of) years.

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Is. xi. 1).

“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations” (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4).

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper” (Jer. xxiii. 5).

“The Lord hath sworn unto David, he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” (Ps. cxxxii. 11).

“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 Messiah. . . . Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. ii. 1-6).

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," God with us (Is. vii. 14).

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" (Is. ix. 6, 7).

CHAPTER III.

THE VISITATION.

THE Angel had given Mary a sign, viz. the conception of her cousin Elizabeth. She had not previously known of it, for they lived far apart, 100 miles or more, Mary at Nazareth, Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea, probably at or near the Levitical city of Hebron. Moreover, Elizabeth had "hid herself," and waited in silence till she saw the event. The supernatural maternity of Elizabeth was vouchsafed to Mary as a sign to assure her of her own miraculous conception. It was a duty not to refuse—like Ahaz—the offered confirmation of her faith. Accordingly "she arose and went into the hill country of Judea with haste, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth."

"And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice:"—Mary did not first tell her the honour bestowed upon herself; Elizabeth knew it by revelation, and was the first to speak of it:—"She spake out with a

loud voice," *i.e.*, with the inspired energy and in the exalted language of a prophetess :—

“Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
And whence is this to me
That the mother of my Lord should come to me,
For lo ! as soon as thy salutation sounded in mine ears,
The babe leaped in my womb for joy,
And blessed is she that believed,
For there shall be a performance of those things which
were told her from the Lord.”

This inspired Canticle of Elizabeth's is not so familiar to us as the other Evangelical Canticles, and its significance is often overlooked. The Angel had given Mary a sign, and in obedience to the implied direction she goes in haste to seek this confirmation of the wonderful announcement which had been made to herself. In the fact of Elizabeth's maternity she finds the sign she sought. She receives, moreover, the additional confirmations of Elizabeth's inspired knowledge of her own miraculous conception, and of her prophetic assurance :—

“Blessed is she that believed,
“For there shall be a performance of those things
which were told her from the Lord.”

“Blessed is she that believed ;” so the fulfilment of the proffered honour had been dependent upon Mary's faith in the word of God, and her resignation to His will. Not indeed that the birth of the Messiah was

dependent on Mary's faith, but His birth *of her* was. Had she failed in faith and willingness, another would doubtless have been chosen—or rather God chose one who, he foresaw, would not fail,—but Mary's faith and holiness were the causes why this blessedness fell upon her and not upon another.

“Blessed art thou among women.” We know that some of the most lamentable perversions of the faith have been with respect to the Virgin Mary. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception,—*i.e.*, the theory that she was herself conceived free from the taint of the hereditary sinfulness of Adam's fallen race,—is a part of that tissue of Mediæval poetical fancies which sought to exalt the mother of our Lord ; another of these opinions was her assumption,—*i.e.*, that her body did not see corruption, but was “assumed” taken up to heaven, and that there she was received by her divine Son, and crowned Queen of Heaven ; that she exercises a prevalent, almost authoritative, interest with her Son, and is to be sought as a mediatrix by those who fear to approach Jesus ; in short, that she holds an intermediate nature and position between the ordinary Saints and the Incarnate Lord, and is herself an object of worship and prayer.

But it would be a very vulgar error, if, in refusing our assent to these exaggerations of the character and position of the Virgin, we were to run to the other extreme, and refuse to award to her her rightful

position in the estimation of wise, thoughtful, and pious minds. God chooses instruments fit for his purposes; and we cannot doubt that for this crowning honour of womanhood He chose one whose holiness of character marked her out for such a destiny. There is no disputing that the mystery of the Incarnation places the Virgin Mother in a position which is unique and transcendent, and which commands our reverent interest. We cannot refuse to recognise the significance of the words of Gabriel, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured: blessed art thou among women"; echoed by the inspired canticle of Elizabeth, "Blessed art thou among women," and, "blessed is she that believed"; accepted by Mary in her inspired utterance, "All generations shall call me blessed, for He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is His Name."

The attitude of mind which it is right to entertain towards the Blessed Virgin Mother seems to be indicated in the words of Elizabeth, "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" In all worldly respects Elizabeth was the superior; one the wife of a priest, that is of the aristocratic caste of the Jewish nation, the other a peasant woman; one an elderly matron, the other a young unmarried girl. True, they were cousins, and this tie, if it diminished the social distance between them, would only lead to a more kindly familiarity on the

part of her who possessed the superior natural and social advantages; but it is Elizabeth who says in the tone of one who receives the distinguished honour and unexpected condescension of a visit from one greatly superior, "Whence is this to me? To what do I owe this honour?" And the ground of this feeling is that Mary is "the Mother of my Lord."

We are expressly told that Elizabeth spoke under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and therefore we conclude that this feeling in her was a legitimate and laudable feeling. To any one disposed to exaggerate this feeling unduly, the tendency ought at once to find its correction in the remarkable words of our Lord to the woman who cried to him, with natural womanly feeling, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked." But he said, "Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke xi. 27, 28).

When Mary set out in haste to seek the sign of the wonderful announcement which had been made to her, she told no one what had happened, "she kept these things in heart." But now the sign is fulfilled, and the angelic message abundantly confirmed by Elizabeth's inspired words, and her heart is set at rest. And thereupon the spirit of inspiration falls upon her also, and in the like prophetic strain she

lifts up her voice and praises God in the words of the Magnificat :—

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord,
 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden,
 For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me
 blessed.
 For He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and
 holy is His name.
 And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation
 to generation.
 He hath shewed strength with His arm ;
 He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their
 heart ;
 He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
 And exalted them of low degree ;
 He hath filled the hungry with good things,
 And the rich he hath sent empty away.
 He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of
 His mercy,
 As He spake to our Fathers, to Abraham, and his seed for
 ever.”¹

¹ Comparing this with the song of Hannah, in which she gave utterance to her thankfulness to God for the birth of Samuel, we find a remarkable similarity of thought between them. There is also a certain similarity in tone and expression between Mary's canticle and some of the Psalms, *e.g.* the 98th, the “ Sing unto the Lord,” which is put in the Prayer-book as its alternative canticle. This inspired hymn of praise affords such fitting expression to the thankfulness of Christ's Church for the Incarnation, which has given the divine nature to the human nature, and taken up the human nature into the divine, and made us one body with Christ, that we take the words out of Mary's mouth and use them, with such

We men, who write books and preach sermons, usually look at things from our own stand-point, and write and preach as men to men, dealing with those questions and taking those views of matters which are interesting to us men. The sacred history does not forget that half mankind are women, and often appears to be specially addressing them ; dealing with such subjects—and treating them from such points of view—as are specially interesting to them. This whole Gospel of the childhood—of equal importance to us all—seems especially addressed to women ; the maiden purity of the Jewish girl, the presentation to her mind of the thought of maternity, the incidents of the Visitation of Elizabeth, the mutual congratulations of the two holy women, seem to belong to the regions of thought and feeling into which women only can fully enter.¹

Such, then, is the simple, beautiful history of the Incarnation of the Son of God ; thus it was that “the Word was made Flesh.”

silently-understood modifications of meaning as are needed, as the Church’s daily thanksgiving for the Incarnation of the Son of God—for the mystery of the Word made Flesh.

¹ When we call to mind that Luke professes to have compiled his history from the testimony of those who had personal knowledge of the events, we see at once the high probability that all this “Gospel of the Childhood” is Mary’s own narrative of the events which she had “kept” and “pondered in her heart” (Luke ii. 19 and 51).

It may be of advantage to direct attention here to one or two points which, in the subsequent history, we shall find of the utmost importance.

The first is this, it was the Divine Power, the power of the Lord and Life Giver, which created in the womb of the Virgin the germ of that humanity, which, taking substance from her, grew into a true human child, who was in due time born in Bethlehem.

The reason of this miraculous conception was, we suppose, to estop the descent of the hereditary taint ; for Adam's fallen race are naturally born in sin, and children of wrath (Ps. li. 5 ; Eph. ii. 3) "born in sin," *i.e.*, inherit a nature which is full of germs of evil, and which, if left to develope without interference, would grow up into a sinful life ; "children of wrath" *i.e.*, seeing the necessary antagonism between good and evil, such an evil creature must necessarily be in antagonism to God and an object of aversion to Him. Had the son of Mary been the child of her marriage with Joseph, he would have inherited this hereditary defect and fault. But it was necessary that the sacrifice for the sin of mankind should himself be sinless, free from hereditary taint as well as guiltless of actual sin. Therefore was Jesus thus miraculously conceived by a direct exercise of the creative power of the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Life Giver.

But the Holy Being which was thus miraculously

conceived in her, took substance of the Virgin Mother, flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone ; He was "the fruit of her womb"; His human nature was derived from her human nature ; so that He was truly man, as truly as she was woman, lineally descended from the first man ; inheriting Adam's manhood in all that constitutes true manhood, only not inheriting that taint, or defect, or fault, which came in upon our manhood afterwards, and which is no more a part of true human nature than disease is a part of life.

Note, again, as a truth of the highest consequence, that from the moment of her conception He was not only man, but God also. "The flesh and the conjunction of the flesh with God began both at one instant," says Hooker ("Eccl. Pol.," bk. ix., l. 3-5). God the Son took to Himself our human nature of the substance of the Virgin Mary ; "the Word was made flesh."

Note again, that the humanity which he took to himself was perfect human nature, or human nature in its perfection. As the first unfallen Adam possessed each faculty perfect in itself,—perfect reason, perfect affections, perfect will, and all in perfectly harmonious proportion,—so the second Adam took upon Him our whole nature, perfect in all its powers and faculties, and in their harmonious proportion and just equipoise.

Yet again, though truly man, our Lord stands above all other men, on a different platform of being. A man is truly animal, but the immortal spirit within him puts him far above all other animals; so Jesus is truly man, but the deity within him puts him far above all other men. There are many men; there is but one Christ.

Mary remained with her cousin Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home in Nazareth. Then it became known that she was with child; and "then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 19.). Self-respect required that he should put her away; pity led him to do it privately, and not to bring her to public shame; the heavenly message satisfied his doubts at once, and he at once obeyed the heavenly command, took the Virgin Mother under the shelter of his name and home, and accepted the charge of the Holy Child.

It was not God's design that the mystery of the

Virgin-birth should immediately be made known to men ; thus, therefore, He protects the reputation of the Virgin Mother and her child. Ignatius (the disciple of St. John) says that thus also God concealed from Satan the fact that "the Virgin had conceived, and born a son," and so protected him from any special assaults of Satan until the time came for him to enter upon the Messiahship, and to encounter in the wilderness the special assault of the great enemy of mankind.

Very little is said of Joseph in the Gospels,—his dream and conduct on this occasion ; his presence at the purification, when he, as well as Mary, " marvelled at those things which were spoken of" Jesus ; his second dream, and consequent flight into Egypt with the Mother and Child ; a third dream, which led him to return from Egypt ; and yet a fourth dream, directing him to take up his residence at Nazareth ; his custom of going up to Jerusalem with Mary every year at the feast of the Passover ; his visit thither when Jesus was twelve years old ; these are the only occasions on which he is an actor, and then always a silent actor, in the sacred history ; but we must not overlook the importance of his position in the holy family, as its head, the Guardian of the holy Childhood.

The Scripture tells us he was "a just man," that is, an upright, good man ; the frequent revelations given

him indicate that he was especially under the Divine guidance; and his prompt and exact obedience to these revelations is evidence of his faith and piety. His intentions towards Mary on the present occasion shew that he was a considerate and charitable man. The way in which the Evangelist associates him with Mary in their marvelling at the things which were spoken at the purification, and the way in which Mary associates him with herself in their anxiety when they could not find Jesus on the return from his first Passover, indicate his entire sympathy with Mary in the care of the Child, and the earnestness with which he fulfilled his duty as His guardian.

God chooses agents qualified for the work they have to do. We seem to see in these traits of Joseph's conduct the outlines of a character, wise, holy, calm, gentle, retiring, full of faith in God and obedience to God; one of those men, full of calm wisdom and quiet power, who do nothing striking, to be talked about, but who fulfil quietly and well all the duties of their life.

The angel spoke to Mary of her child as the Messiah, the son of David, the founder of the Universal and Lasting Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace:—
“The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” He speaks to Joseph of the other and deeper

aspect of His work :—" He shall save His people from their sins." We shall find, now one now another, of these two aspects of the work of the Christ continually brought forward throughout the Gospels,—the spiritual work of Christ in the souls of men, and the external organisation of the heavenly kingdom ; and the two must both be kept in view, in order to obtain a complete conception of the work of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

“IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS.”

IT came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed” (Luke ii. 1). Preachers and painters have set the Nativity before our minds surrounded by a halo of religious sentiment through whose golden haze the event sometimes perhaps assumes an appearance of unreality. It is right that we should view the event with the eye of faith in all its divine grandeur and infinite importance ; but first let us see clearly with the eye of reason that it was a real event ; and mark—as the sentence above quoted suggests—how and where and when it fits in with the course of the world’s history.

We shall find it in the end very useful to our main object, if we take a little pains at the outset to obtain a clear summary view of the course of Jewish history from the Captivity down to the period of the beginning of the Gospel narrative. Such a review soon makes us recognise what a prominent place Daniel’s prophecy of the course of history (Dan. ii. 31) must

have held in the minds of the Jewish people "in those days" which we are considering ; for its earlier portions sketch the period from the Captivity to the period at which they had arrived, and there were reasons for believing that the remaining portion of the prophecy was about to enter upon its fulfilment. The great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had typified, according to Daniel's interpretation, four great monarchies, succeeding each the other on the stage of history ; and with these four monarchies the Jews had been brought into intimate political relations. The kings of Assyria put an end to the kingdom of Israel, and carried the Israelites captive, "and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings xvii. 6), *i.e.* in the fertile district watered by the (modern) Khabour, the northern part of Mesopotamia. And Nebuchadnezzar put an end to the kingdom of Judah, and carried the Jews captive to Babylon. Thus the Assyro-Babylonian monarchy was made the instrument of God's chastisement of his people for their sins.

When Babylon, "the head of Gold," had been succeeded by the Persian monarchy, "the silver kingdom," Cyrus (B.C. 536) gave the people leave to return to their own land and rebuild their city and Temple. Only a small proportion of the people had a sufficiently strong feeling of patriotism and religion to abandon the homes in which they had been born,

and the occupations in which they had grown into prosperity in the fertile plains about the Tigris and Euphrates, to undertake the task of reclaiming the desolated hills of Judea and rebuilding the city and Temple out of their ruins. The rest of the people remained in the land of their captivity, a numerous and prosperous people, enjoying a large amount of self-government under a prince of the house of David, to whom they gave the expressive title of "Prince of the Captivity."

The difficulties which the returned exiles encountered in the reconstruction of their city and Temple are told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. What we have especially to notice here is that Ezra revived in the new commonwealth of Israel the original theocratic constitution. Restored Israel was a Church, not a Monarchy. The high priest was its chief magistrate, the Law of Moses its code. It was virtually independent, under the protection and patronage of the Persian monarchy.

After 250 years' duration the Persian monarchy gave place to the Grecian, "the kingdom of brass." Alexander (B.C. 306) visited Jerusalem, which opened her gates to him, and the conqueror left to the Jewish commonwealth its independence, and took it under his protection.

The Macedonian conquests broke up the political constitutions of the ancient civilisations of the East

and of Egypt, and introduced a new civilisation in their place. Greek cities were built on a scale of great architectural magnificence ; the Greek language became the universal medium of literature and of commercial intercourse ; Greek manners were generally adopted by the better classes of the Eastern races ; and Greek philosophy undermined the ancient Eastern religions, and produced a general tone of scepticism.

In the division of the Greek conquests which followed on the death of Alexander, Judea became the frontier country between the rival kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. For the most part it retained its self-government, paying a tribute to the Antiochus of Syria or the Ptolemy of Egypt, as each alternately gained the superiority ; and, on the whole, the Jewish nation flourished under the Greek rule. For a time the strong religious feeling of the Jews resisted the inroad of Greek manners. Antiochus Epiphanes aimed at the more complete incorporation of Judea into his dominion. He aided Joshua to supplant his brother Onias "the Good" in the high priesthood, and the traitor proceeded to use his influence to induce the people to abandon their national peculiarities, and to adopt Greek manners. Soon afterwards Antiochus seized the pretext of some civil commotions to march upon Jerusalem, and occupy it as a conqueror. He pillaged the Temple of its

sacred vessels and treasures, carried off spoil and captives, and left Philip, a Phrygian, as governor of the city. A few years later he again occupied the city, pillaged it, destroyed its walls, and dedicated the Temple to Zeus Olympius, to whom he set up an altar upon the great brazen altar of burnt sacrifice. He caused heathen altars to be set up throughout the country, and proceeded to compel the Jews, by torture and death, to abandon their religion and adopt that of their conqueror.

This last outrage led to the revolt of the Maccabees and the war of independence, which, "if less famous, is not less glorious than any of those in which a few brave men have successfully maintained the cause of freedom or religion against overpowering might."¹

The revolt was ultimately successful. Judea secured its entire independence, and the family of its liberators (the Asmonean family) obtained, as the reward of their patriotism, the hereditary high priesthood, and the supreme authority.

The priest-kings of this race continued for a century, till a contest between Hyrcanus and his brother, Aristobulus, who had driven Hyrcanus away, and seized the priesthood, offered a pretext for foreign intervention.

The Roman republic, the fourth great power, "the

¹ "Bible Dict.": Art. *Maccabees*.

iron kingdom," had already succeeded to the Greek, and was extending its sovereignty over the East.

Hyrchanus sought the aid of the Romans. Pompey took Jerusalem by force of arms (A.D. 63) and restored Hyrchanus; but he reduced the area of his dominions, gave freedom to many cities, placing them under the prefect of Syria, and forbade Hyrchanus to wear the diadem, the token of independent sovereignty, on his high priestly tiara, *i.e.* he reduced Judea to the position of a dependent state. In 47 B.C. Julius Cæsar confirmed the government to Hyrchanus, with the title of "Ethnarch"; but he made Antipater the Idumean, who had been Hyrchanus's chief minister, Procurator, *i.e.* the representative of the Roman sovereignty, a kind of "Political Resident" at the court of Hyrchanus; and Antipater made his eldest son, Phasaelis, governor of Judea, and Herod, his younger son, at fifteen years old, governor of Galilee, to which, shortly afterwards, the government of Cœle Syria was added. The relations between the high priest and the procurator were strengthened by the betrothal of Hyrchanus's granddaughter, the beautiful Mariamne, to the noble youth, Herod, who had already given evidence of a great character. When Antony came to Syria in 41 B.C. he conferred on Phasaelis and Herod (Antipater, their father, having been recently slain) the title of "Tetrarch."

Antigonus, the son of the Aristobulus above mentioned, maintained his claim to succeed to his father's usurped dignity. He obtained help from the Parthians, and with their aid obtained possession of the person of his uncle Hyrcanus, mutilated him by cutting off his ears, and so made him incapable, as a blemished person, of exercising the office of high priest; he killed Phasaelis, and reduced Herod to the necessity of a hasty flight. Herod fled to Rome, and besought the interest of Antony and Cæsar, his friends and patrons, to solicit of the Senate the appointment of Aristobulus, the son of Hyrcanus and brother of Mariamne, to the high priesthood. The Senate instead, at the instance of his powerful patrons, conferred on Herod the government of Judea, with the title of "King." It was, however, three years before Herod, with the aid of Roman arms, succeeded in driving Antigonus out of Jerusalem. During the siege Herod married Mariamne. When seated in Jerusalem he sent for Hyrcanus, and treated him with great outward respect, affecting to regard him as co-sovereign; but he raised an obscure priest from Babylon, Ananelus, to the dignity of high priest. Soon after, indeed, he deposed Ananelus and raised Aristobulus to the dignity which his ancestors had held for so many generations; but shortly he had the unhappy youth secretly murdered. Before long he had Hyrcanus put to death,

and then, in a fit of jealousy, Mariamne, and took care ever after to exclude the Asmonean family from a position so dangerous to his own security.

Herod was a man of noble presence, an able statesman, a successful administrator, an ambitious prince, in favour with the emperor. Josephus says (*Antiq.* xv. 10, 3), whereas there were but two men who governed the Roman empire, first Cæsar, then Agrippa, who was his principal favourite; Cæsar esteemed Herod next to Agrippa, and Agrippa had no greater friend than Herod except Cæsar. He built up a kingdom which in its extent and prosperity recalled the traditional splendour of Solomon. Lavish in his expenditure and magnificent in his tastes, he strengthened and beautified his capital. He built the strong castle of Antonia on the north of the Temple, and a palace-fortress in the upper city, and otherwise strengthened the city with forts and adorned it with public buildings. Especially he rebuilt the Temple with such magnificence as to make it one of the wonders of the world.

But though Herod was by hereditary profession a Jew, and though he used the fanatical attachment of the Jews to their religion as an engine of state, he really shared the Roman toleration of, and practical disbelief in, all religions. He affected Roman manners, and sent several of his sons to Rome, where they lived in great friendship and intimacy with the

emperor and the principal men of Rome (Josephus, *Antiq.* xv. 10, 1).

He built a theatre in Jerusalem, and an amphitheatre outside the city, in which he instituted quinquennial games with combats of gladiators in honour of Cæsar. He built a temple of Jupiter in his new town of Cæsarea by the sea, and another temple in the city of Sebaste (Samaria) which he strongly fortified. Besides building several other cities, palaces, and public works in his own dominions, his magnificence was displayed in costly works in other places both in Syria and in Greece; *e.g.*, he built a street a mile long, adorned with colonnades as an entrance into the city of Antioch, and gave revenues for the revival of the splendour of the Olympian games there; he rebuilt the temple of Apollo at Rhodes, and gave the citizens a large sum for the repair of their fleet.

By the success and splendour of his reign, by the magnificence of his public works, and by the estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries, he merited the title, which history has bestowed upon him, of "the Great." But he was a man of strong and violent passions, suspicious, jealous, unscrupulous, tyrannical, and cruel. He was as unhappy in his domestic relations as he was fortunate in public affairs. The sections of his family intrigued against one another and inflamed his mind with suspicions,

under whose influence, at various times, he put to death his favourite wife Mariamne, and three of his sons, and many others of those who were nearest to him.

It was in the seventieth year of his age and thirty-fourth¹ of his reign—when sickness had enfeebled him, and domestic treasons and domestic tragedies had embittered his life ; when his successful, magnificent, tyrannical, bloodstained reign was drawing to its close—that the Gospel history begins.

It was the 26th year of the reign of Augustus, one of the great ages of the world's history and one better known to us than any other period of ancient history, an age of great Statesmen, and Philosophers and Poets.

“These things were not done in a corner,” said Paul at the tribunal of Festus. The Roman arms had thrown the world wide open, and the light of Greek philosophy and Roman common sense had lighted it up, and a spirit of universal incredulity searched everything through and through.

“Those” were “the days” in which the decree went forth from Cæsar Augustus “that all the world should be taxed,” *i.e.*, that a census of the Roman world should be taken ; and Herod, in compliance with the wish of his imperial patron, ordered such a census to be made in his kingdom.

¹ Thirty-seventh from his nomination to the kingdom.

In Italy the people would be numbered naturally by their towns and villages ; but it was in accordance with ancient Jewish usage that a census of the people should be taken by their tribes and families. Therefore all the people were ordered for the purposes of this census to go to the place from which their family had sprung, and so it came to pass that " Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child " (Luke ii. 49).

CHAPTER V.

THE NATIVITY.

HALF A DOZEN miles south of Jerusalem, situated on the crest of a long limestone hill, was the little city of Bethlehem, dear to Israel as the birth-place of King David, dearer to the true Israel as the birth-place of a greater than he. The descendants of the once royal house were scattered far and wide. Since the Captivity the high-priests had been the rulers of the nation—until the Romans came and conquered the land, and placed Herod over it—and the ancient royal house had fallen into obscurity and decay. Of the men and women, who came up to Bethlehem because they were of the house and lineage of David, some were from the neighbouring fields and farms, and some from the distant hills of Galilee ; some, perhaps, men of wealth and consideration, some peasants and artisans ; some, doubtless, had friends in the town who housed them hospitably, and some crowded the caravanserai outside the city walls.

This caravanserai was connected with the history of David. When the king was returning to Jeru-

salem after the defeat of Absalom's rebellion, he invited Barzillai, the old Gileadite chieftain who had so hospitably entertained him in his temporary exile, to accompany him to Jerusalem, and attach himself to his court, that he might return his hospitality. Barzillai declined on the ground of his advanced age, but substituted his son Chimham for himself. It would seem that David gave Chimham lands at Bethlehem out of his patrimonial estate; and that Chimham, in the princely spirit of his father, built on this land a caravanserai for the public accommodation,—it is one of the ordinary works of Eastern charitable munificence; and this "Khan of Chimham" became well known as the place where travellers were accustomed to assemble, and form themselves into caravans for mutual protection on the hazardous journey down to Egypt.

To this historical khan strangers had been flocking all day, till all the chambers ranged round its court were filled, and the court itself crowded with the horses and mules and asses of the travellers. In the evening of the day a middle-aged man came, accompanied by his youthful wife, who approached the time of her confinement. There was no room for them in the khan; but beside the khan, in the hill-side, was one of the innumerable caves which honey-combed the limestone hills of Judea, used as a stable; here the late comers found a rude shelter;

and here during the night, under circumstances of such discomfort, the young wife was delivered of a son, whom she wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and cradled in a hollow of the rock out of which the cattle ate their provender.

The sun had risen above the eastern hills!

This birth takes its place as a plain historical fact in the record of the world's doings:—Augustus, perhaps, was supping with Mæcenas and Horace, in Rome; Herod was, perhaps, in his palace-fortress of Macherus, only a few miles off across the Judæan hills, when this child was born in the grotto-stable adjoining the khan of Chimham, at Bethlehem. The name of the new-born child was inscribed next day in the census roll, among the children of the house of David; and Justin Martyr, one hundred years afterwards, appealed to the original documents of the census, still preserved among the archives of Rome.

“The Virgin and Child!” How many myriads of representations of the subject Art has given to the world! There is a perennial human attraction in the sight of a mother and her child which touches every heart; there is a mystery of nature in this type of reproduction—of life reproducing itself in another life, which has an undying interest. There is a special natural attraction, too, in this mother and child; for this is the first and only perfect human

babe the world has seen. Adam and Eve were created in maturity. When Eve looked upon the firstborn cradled in her lap, she looked upon the exiled heir of Paradise, whose sole inheritance was a fallen nature. This Babe, conceived by miracle and born of a Virgin, is the one only human babe which has exhibited fully and without imperfection the characteristics of the race, the divine ideal of a human child.

But it is the divine mystery in the Virgin Mother and the Divine Child which has made this group the subject which Art has more frequently reproduced than any other. And it has had the effect of teaching vividly the great foundation-truth of religion, that the "Word was made flesh," that the Son of God was born of a woman. Only let us bear in mind, in trying to paint the picture to our mind's eye, that it is a true human child lying on the lap of his mother. We must not imagine any luminous glory, like that of Moses when he came down from the Mount, beaming from his infant person; we must not suppose that there is really any divine depth in his limpid eyes. He is God as well as man, but the Godhead is, here as always, invisible; all which is visible is man. And yet the Nativity of the Divine Child was not without its external signs and supernatural indications to call the attention of the world to the Babe of Bethlehem.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

“**T**HERE were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.”

“And the angel said unto them,” as he had done to Zachariah and to Mary, “Fear not,” “For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

And he gave to them a sign, as he had previously given to Zachariah and to Mary, “This shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.”

And when the angel had proclaimed his gospel, there suddenly flashed upon the sight of the shepherds “a multitude of the heavenly host,” the choir attendant upon the heavenly choragus, who burst forth into an anthem of praise:—“Glory to God in

the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.”¹ The angels did not fade again into the darkness, but ascended to heaven in the sight of the wondering shepherds. And when the angelic vision had receded out of sight, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.”

And when they had seen it, and so the message was verified by the sign, then “they made known abroad” what had happened to them, the vision of angels, and the good tidings proclaimed from heaven, that this Babe was the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord. And all they that heard it, including, no doubt, many of the strangers “of the house and lineage of David,” who were gathered for the occasion at Bethlehem, “wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” And they returned to their flock, “glorifying and praising God for all the things

¹ It may be well to state at once that the Authorized Version of the Gospels has been adhered to throughout this work. The Revised Version has not yet been received by the Church, neither have its proposed alterations in the Greek and in the Translation yet received the general adhesion of scholars. See articles in the *Quarterly Review* for 1881 and 1882; and pamphlets by the Bishop of Derry and Bishop Wordsworth of St. Andrews.

which they had heard, and seen, as it was told unto them."

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

We wonder, perhaps, why this angelic vision and this great announcement came to two or three humble shepherds, and not to Augustus in Rome, or to Herod in Jerusalem. But at least we see that it is in accordance with the fact that Jesus was not born in the house of the Cæsars on the Palatine Mount, or in Herod's palace at Jerusalem, but in a stable in Bethlehem; it is in harmony with our Lord's utterance, "I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

These shepherds were the chosen representatives of Israel, they were the firstfruits of the chosen people who recognised the Lord. If we knew who—or rather what—they were, we should, perhaps, recognize the propriety of the announcement to them; for God does not act capriciously,—there is a reason of infinite wisdom for all He does. There is a good Mediæval story that two ascetic devotees in a nunnery, who were beginning to feel some motions of spiritual pride, were told in a dream that there were in the city two holier women than they. And when they sought the house indicated to them in their

dream they found two homely women, who had husbands and children, and who were so fulfilling the ordinary duties of their lowly life that they were more devout than the devotees. If we knew what these shepherds of Bethlehem were, we might find them men who knew as well as the chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and who had a longing as great as Simeon's to see His advent, and who in their night-watch were accustomed to talk of, and pray for, and expect His coming; and we might recognise it as the reward of faith and prayer, that they were chosen to be the first of all Israel to hear the Gospel, and to see the Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CIRCUMCISION.



WHEN God called Abraham out of the rest of mankind and brought him into relations of special nearness to Himself, in a New Covenant, He gave him an outward sign (the sign of circumcision), by which he and all his posterity,—the heirs of the promises,—should be admitted into this new covenant:—"I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. . . . Every man-child among you shall be circumcised, and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you" (Gen. xvii. 7, 10, 11).

The peculiar nature of the rite had probably an allusion to the doctrine of "original sin," *i. e.* the doctrine that every child, naturally descended from Adam, has inherited from him a nature corrupted through sin; and it signified the remission of the guilt attaching to this condition of hereditary sinfulness; and admission into the special covenant of

grace:—"being by nature born in sin and children of wrath, they were hereby made children of grace."

The taint of Adam's sin had not been inherited by our Blessed Lord owing to the miraculous nature of His incarnation; the angel spoke of "that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee"; and St. John declares that "in Him is no sin"; and St. Paul, that he is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). Why, then, should he be circumcised? Because, being a child of Abraham, born under the law, and sent to fulfil the law, it was clearly fitting that he should enter into the covenant which God had made with Abraham and his seed, and the only way to enter into it was through the appointed rite: so he was obedient to the law in this its initiatory obligation. And though sinless by nature, as sinless afterwards in life, yet he came to be made "sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), and so he humbled Himself to be "numbered among the transgressors."

Accordingly, "when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke ii. 21).

It was a domestic rite, performed, not at the temple, but at home; not by a priest, but by the father, or some friend of the family. As it was our Blessed Lord's first obedience to the law for man, so it was

his first suffering, and these were the first drops of His precious blood shed, on behalf of man.

The rite was usually accompanied by the giving of a name to the child. And our Lord was named Jesus in obedience to the divine direction given first to Mary, "thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke i. 31), and afterwards to Joseph, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21).

The custom of giving a name to a child is coeval with the human race, and names are all, more or less intentionally, significant. God called the first man Adam—Earth, because he was made of the dust of the ground. And Adam called his wife's name Eve—Life-giving, because she was the mother of all living. And Eve called her first-born Cain—Acquisition, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," the idea is more definitely expressed, perhaps, in the mediæval name, Deus-dedit. Lamech called his son Noah—Consolation, saying, "This same shall comfort us."

God had previously announced the supernatural births of Isaac and of John the Baptist, and in both cases had dictated a name at the time of the announcement. And now the name dictated by God at the annunciation is given to the Divine Child, the name which announces his quality, Jesus—

Saviour, "because he shall save his people from their sins."

Let us not fail to observe the fulness of the interpretation of the Saviour's name thus given us from heaven, Jesus, "because he shall save his people from their sins." It defines the mode of salvation. He shall save his people out of the miseries of this world into the happiness of heaven by saving them from their sins. And as there is no other Saviour than He, so there is no other salvation than this. It is sin which is the cause of ruin and misery and death, and the effects can only be removed by the removal of the cause.

To take all men such as they are, and translate them to heaven, would only be to introduce sin and misery into the abodes of the blessed. To place a single sinner as he is among the blessed in heaven would not be to save him. The evil is in the man himself, not merely in his surroundings. The cause of man's infelicity is sin. The only effectual remedy for his miserable condition, is not to alter his surroundings merely, but to alter himself, to eliminate sin out of his nature.

Joshua could only save his people from the wilderness, and plant them in the Promised Land, where they took their sins with them; and consequently were miserable, and perished in Canaan as their fathers did in the wilderness. Our Jesus saves his

people from their sins, and even while they remain in the wilderness of this world they are already saved,¹ they have eternal life,² their conversation is in heaven;³ and when He brings them into the heavenly Canaan they live a perfectly sinless, and, therefore a perfectly noble and blissful life for ever.

¹ I Cor. i. 18.

² John vi. 54.

³ Phil. iii. 20.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

FTER the birth of our Lord, the holy family, doubtless, remained in Bethlehem till it was the time to go up to Jerusalem to fulfil the requirements of the law. For it was commanded in the law (Lev. xii.), that when a woman had given birth to a child, she should, at the end of forty days for a male-child, and of eighty days for a female child, "bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest; who shall offer it before the Lord, and make an atonement for her. And if she be not able," by reason of poverty, "to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, the one for the burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean." It is a remarkable rite—that a woman **after** childbirth, should have to offer a burnt-offering and sin-offering, and have an atonement made for her, in the same way as for one who had

committed a sin. It seems to have been to teach, over and over again, with respect to every child born into the world, that Adam's sinful nature descended to every one of his posterity, so that in every birth the mother brought a sinful being into the world.

So, when the days of her purification were accomplished, Mary came up to Jerusalem, bringing the offering of the poor—the two turtle-doves—for her offering. We have all seen the beautiful modern engraving which represents her with the sweet but solemn happiness of a young mother, bringing her turtle-doves nestling in her bosom.

But there was a further commandment of the law to be observed. It was required that every first-born man-child should be taken to the Temple on the day of the mother's purification, to be presented before the Lord.

This was a memorial of the sparing of the first-born of the Israelites, when the plague slew the first-born of the Egyptians on the night of the Exodus. In that night of terror and anguish the destroying angel slew all the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast. The Israelites were not spared for their innocence, but of God's special mercy; and in token of this the paschal lambs (representing the first-born of cattle) were slain, and their blood sprinkled on the doorposts of the houses of the

Israelites, and the angel seeing in the blood the confession of guilt and the token of the vicarious sacrifice, passed over them. But God claimed the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, for ever after, as belonging to Himself: "Sanctify¹ unto me all the first-born," the first-born "among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine." The first-born children were dedicated to His service (Exodus xiii. 2, and xxxiv. 19). The first-born of beasts, if clean, were offered in sacrifice; if unclean, the owner might redeem them at a price to be paid to the Temple treasury; if he did not care to redeem them they were to be slain as a quasi-offering.

God afterwards took the Levites instead of the first-born: "The Levites shall be mine; instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel have I taken them unto me" (Numbers viii. 14, 16). Only the Lord commanded that every first-born should be presented before Him in the Temple, and that he should be redeemed by payment of a half-shekel. It was the individual domestic memorial, as the Feast of the Passover was the national commemoration, of the deliverance of the first-born on the night of the Passover.

Accordingly, when Mary went up to Jerusalem for her Purification accompanied by Joseph, "they brought

¹ To sanctify = to dedicate to God's service

Jesus also to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" (Luke ii. 22). The presentation of Christ was the antitype of all the presentations of first-born which had been made for fifteen centuries. This was the true First-born, the Only-begotten, whom God had sanctified for his own service.

And He is not without witness. As the angels hovered over Bethlehem, and the shepherds "made known abroad the saying that was told them concerning this child," and the star appeared to the Magi, and their inquiries called the attention of Herod and of the chief priests and scribes and all Jerusalem to their announcement of the birth of Messiah, so now again, when he appears in his temple it is not without welcome and witness.

"There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," *i.e.*, for the Messiah's coming, "and the Holy Ghost was upon him" in an unusual manner or degree, as is shown by what is next stated of a special inspiration. "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple" (Luke ii. 25). And when Joseph and Mary entered with the child Jesus to do for him according to the law, the Holy Spirit caused Simeon to recognise in him the Christ for whom he waited. "Then took he

him up in his arms,"—(the tradition that Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch, was the child whom Jesus set in the midst of his disciples and took in his arms (Mark ix. 36), gives the venerable martyr additional interest in our eyes; with similar interest we regard the man who took up Christ in his arms),—"and blessed God, and said:—

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel.”

“And Joseph and his mother,” we read, “marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.”¹ It would seem that they were ignorant of the fulness of

¹ This song of Simeon has been adopted by the Church of Christ as one of the canticles of its evening worship from the earliest ages; it is so mentioned in the “Apostolical Constitutions.” It expresses the calm faith of one who in the evening of life, assured of the salvation which God has given in Christ, is content to lie down in peace and sleep the sleep of death, in full confidence of a joyful awakening. The evening of every day is a type of the evening of our life; of the evening of the world’s life; and every evening the Church borrows the inspired words of Simeon to express its calm faith and thanksgiving. Happy the man who in the evening of his life can say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” That it may be so with us let us so live every day, that every evening we may sing that song.

the mystery to which they were so near. They knew of the miraculous birth, they believed that He was to be the Messiah; but they did not comprehend the divine nature of the child, and the rays of glory which, as it were, broke forth from behind the veil of his humanity from time to time and played about his infant head, filled them with wonder:—“Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke ii. 19). “Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (Luke ii. 33), and so by observation and comparison, meditation and prayer, did they gradually ascend to the height of that divine knowledge which still was “not far from them, but in their mouth and in their heart.” So we also, though we knew the great truths of the Gospel long before, yet if we keep them and ponder them in our hearts, are continually gaining new insight into that which we had before seen and thought we knew, but now find that our former knowledge was comparative ignorance.

“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Another remarkable person was also present, one Anna, a prophetess, an aged widow, if we rightly

understand the narrative,¹ of the great age of over 100 years, who “departed not from the Temple”; but, perhaps, being recognised as “a prophetess,” lived in one of the numerous apartments of the Temple, and “served God with fastings and prayers, day and night.” “She coming into” the women’s court of “the Temple, that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord; and” subsequently “spoke of Jesus to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem,”—viz., to those numerous persons who, doubtless, visited the devotee and prophetess in her own apartment, and those whom she met continually in the women’s court when they came to worship there.

Pause to look at the group of persons thus brought before our eyes, as they stand, probably in the women’s court, outside the magnificent gate called the “Beautiful Gate.” The priest, holding the Holy Child in his arms, on the upper step; and on a lower step Simeon and Anna uttering their inspired praises and blessings; and Mary and Joseph standing wondering by; and probably a crowd of spectators whose

¹ “She had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow 4 score and 4 years” (Revised Ver.). A woman of eighty-four would hardly be spoken of emphatically as “of a great age,” but if about $12 + 7 + 84 = 103$, it would be natural so to speak of her.

attention has been attracted, and who gather upon and about the foot of the stair gazing upwards at the group. It is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Haggai, "The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai ii. 7); and of Malachi, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple" (Mal. iii. 1).

If Simeon was, indeed, as many have thought, the famous Simeon son of the great Rabbi Hillel and father of the Rabbi of hardly less reputation, Gamaliel, then he was at this time the chief of the Sanhedrim, the representative of the Law; and the occasion assumes an appearance of high symbolical significance. The Priest who receives the divine child, the great Rabbi, and the Prophetess, represent the great branches of the Jewish Church and the great ideas of its religion. We see the Lord suddenly come to his temple and there received and acknowledged by prophet, priest, and scribe; and the prophetess fulfils her function by speaking of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel. Or, we may see, in the group of the aged Simeon with the infant Jesus in his arms, the Law, aged and ready to depart, acknowledging and giving its testimony to the Gospel.

We linger yet a little longer to note the light which is thrown by this narrative upon the state of the Jewish Church at the time of our Lord's coming.

The popular view of the state of the Jewish church at this period is that true religion was dead. We seem to read of the Sadducees as wordly-minded sceptics, of the Pharisees as hypocrites, and of the priests and scribes as the persecutors and murderers of Christ. When we look more closely we see that, however this may have been the general character of the people, there were many exceptions. If we only glance through the sacred narrative so far as we have already gone, we find Zacharias the priest and his wife Elizabeth "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"; Mary "filled with grace" and "blessed among women"; Joseph "a just man"; Simeon "just and devout" and "the Holy Ghost was upon him"; Anna, who "served God night and day"; and "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

A flood of light is thrown also on God's dealings with the Jewish church in those latter days. It was 300 years since the canon of Scripture had been closed, the people had lost their independence, they were now living in intercourse with Greece and Rome, in the full blaze of science and philosophy and civilisation, in one of the most enlightened and civilised periods of the world's history, yet we find God's ordinary and his supernatural grace still active among his people. We go no further than the

group before us, for illustration of the ordinary grace by which men became eminent for saintliness, in Mary and Joseph, of the supernatural grace by which God works always in his church, in Anna the devotee and prophetess, and Simeon the just man and devout with whom the Holy Ghost habitually was, who had received special divine revelation, and was inspired with the "Nunc Dimittis" and the prophecy to Mary.

The narrative throws light also on another subject which must often exercise the mind of the thoughtful reader, viz., the rejection of Christ by the Jews as a nation. We are sometimes disposed to think that there must be some special excuses for a rejection which was so general. Their rejection seems to have arisen from the fact that Christ was not the kind of Messiah whom they expected, and did not promise to do what they desired. They expected a temporal conqueror, who would deliver them from the Roman yoke and found a new universal empire, of which they should be the leading people. He was something far grander and offered them something far more desirable; but the worldliness, pride, and unspirituality of their hearts made them blind to the spiritual glory of Christ and his kingdom, and they rejected him, declared him a deceiver, and crucified him. But we have evidence here that the humble, teachable, spiritual minded, were not unprepared to accept Christ as he was, and the kingdom as it was

now revealed. The shepherds accepted the Babe cradled in a manger as "Christ the Lord" (Luke ii. 11). The magi we shall presently see worshipped the child of the lowly Mary as King of the Jews, and offered him the presents of a king (Matt. ii. 11). Simeon recognised as the Lord's Christ the child whose parents could only bring as the offering for his redemption the two turtle doves of the poor. The "Nunc Dimittis" shows that the two thoughts which were so repugnant to the wordly Jewish mind, a suffering Christ, and the equality of the Gentiles, presented no such difficulties to the pious Jewish mind:— "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also"; "a light to lighten the Gentiles" as well as "the glory of thy people Israel."

"That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." So said the prophet Malachi, "the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple . . . but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. iii. 1, 2.)

The Lord does spiritually come from time to time to his church; he comes from time to time in the spiritual history of each one of his people, and when he comes it is a testing time.

Our time is a time of Christ's coming to his church, in a great revival and increase of true religion among

us, in a republication of half-forgotten truths, in a call to greater earnestness, unworldliness, self-denial, and self-devotion. It is a testing time, the honest and good hearts, the pure and teachable hearts, will receive the new manifestation of Christ to them, and respond to it and grow in grace and holiness; the proud and worldly and impure will be offended, and will harden themselves against Christ, and seek another Christ, and find nothing but disappointment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.



THE incident of the Adoration of the Magi, related by St. Matthew, seems, from the internal evidence of the history, to have occurred some time in the second year from our Lord's birth. In that case we must conclude that Joseph and Mary had settled down in the place to which God's providence had led them. It might well seem to them to be God's will that the Child should not only be born, but also be brought up, in the city of his father David.

“There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.’”—Matt. ii. 1, 2.

It does not appear, on a study of the whole narrative, that the star (as represented in popular pictures) went before them as a guide from their abode in the East to Jerusalem. It seems only to have appeared to them as a sign, and then to have disappeared, other indications leading them to understand its meaning. We call to mind that these Magi came from the country of Balaam, who prophesied

of the "Star which should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre which should rise out of Israel" (Numb. xxiv. 17); the country of Daniel, who prophesied (Dan. ii. 44, 45; vii. 13, 14) of the fifth universal kingdom, and of the "One like the Son of Man . . . to whom was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." If these prophecies had been, as is very possible, preserved among the successors of "the wise men of Babylon," together with some traditional interpretation of them, this would perhaps be enough to account for the meaning which they assigned to the appearance of this star.

Again, when we compare the way in which God was revealing his will at this time to Joseph in repeated dreams, with the recorded fact that God warned the Magi in a dream not to return to the East by the way by which they came, it is a probable conjecture that God also revealed to them in a dream the birth of the Universal King, and bade them go and worship him; and that he gave them a sign in the star, as he had given a sign to Zechariah, to the Virgin, and to the shepherds. So that these Gentiles, like God's people, had ancient prophecy and present revelation and confirming sign.¹

¹ The incident has an interest as one of the series of special revelations which God from time to time made to persons out-

Naturally the Magi went to the capital of the country to inquire for the new-born King of the Jews. Their inquiries were publicly made, and became generally known. And when Herod the king heard of them "he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." The magnificent old tyrant, half-distracted with disease and family discords, jealous of the power which he felt was falling from his dying hands, was in such a state that the suggestion of a pretender to the grand monarchy which he had built up with daring and statesmanship, and craft and crime, and which he had hoped might grow into a still grander Empire of the East, would be likely to excite suspicions which would breed danger to his throne and all about him. No wonder, therefore, that all Jerusalem also was disturbed with mingled hopes and fears.

He summoned the chief priests and the scribes, the political and religious leaders and the men of learning, and no doubt they obeyed his summons with fear. But his present object was only to ask them where, according to the prophecies, Christ should be born. For while the Gentiles were vaguely

side the special covenant: as to Job and his friends, Abimelech, Pharaoh, Balaam, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great (if we credit Josephus's account of his dream), these Magi, and Cornelius the centurion.

expecting the birth of some illustrious monarch, the Jews were definitely looking for their Messiah ; and it would at once suggest itself to the mind of a Jew that it was He at whom the inquiries of these Eastern Magi pointed. Herod at once took it for granted, and sent for the chief priests and scribes of the people to inquire of them where Christ should be born.

The prophecies relating to the Messiah had, no doubt, been of late collected and studied with the interest natural in those who expected their speedy fulfilment. The chief priests and scribes had no difficulty in replying that a prophecy of Micah (v. 2) pointed out Bethlehem as the birth-place of the Messiah, "for thus it is written by the Prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda ; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel."

Herod dismissed the priests and scribes, and then he carefully obtained information from the Magi as to the time of the star's appearance. This they told him, and from what they told him he made his calculations as to the age of the child they sought. In answer to further inquiries they had no definite information to give. So Herod indicated Bethlehem as the probable birth-place of the King they sought, and sent them thither to complete their quest ; and

desired them, when they had found the child, to bring him word again, professing his pious intention to go and worship him also. The inquiries of the Magi would have the effect of raising the expectation of all the Jews as to the coming of the Messiah. The replies of the chief priests and scribes would inform the Magi of the Jewish belief as to the character of the King whose birth had been made known to them.

When they had departed from Jerusalem, journeying south towards Bethlehem, "lo! the star which they saw in the East" re-appeared to them; "and when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." We can suppose that the ignorance of Jerusalem that any king had been born among them, and, perhaps, the incredulity of Jerusalem that God should have revealed Messiah's birth to these strangers rather than to his own people, may have perplexed and troubled their minds; and this re-appearance of the sign, was a confirmation of all which they had believed, and which had led them to set out on their long journey, and a proof to them that they were in the right way, and under Divine guidance in the prosecution of their search. And "the star went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was."

The star was therefore moving at but a small height in the air, or it could not have plainly indicated

one particular house from among the houses of the city. For the next sentence tells us that it was not in the stable of the inn, nor in the inn itself, but in a house that the Magi found the Holy Family; which agrees with the conjecture that they had taken up their settled abode in Bethlehem. "And when they were come into the house" they no doubt told all the story of the star and of their journey, and of the object of their coming. "And when they saw the young child and Mary his mother they fell down and worshipped him," did homage to him as to a king. And opening their treasures they offered presents to him as to a king: "they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

We have put the Adoration of the Magi in its chronological order, but in the natural grouping of the circumstances of the Nativity, it stands beside the Adoration of the Shepherds. The one was the manifestation of the Christ to the Jews, the other his manifestation to the Gentiles.

It was the first fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (lx. 3). "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." That other prophecy in the Psalms (lxxii. 10, 11) seemed also here to find its first fulfilment:—

"The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall give presents :
The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts."

They were the first-fruits of the Gentiles, of whom the Psalmist went on to say :—

“ All kings shall fall down before him :
All nations shall do him service.”

The King who was born was not to be King of the Jews only, but his kingdom was to extend over all the nations. The Jews were not to be a dominant race, but Jew and Gentile were to stand on terms of equal citizenship in the kingdom of the Christ. Already Simcon had declared him “ a Light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as “ the glory of God’s people Israel.” And so a revelation of the birth of the Desire of all Nations is made to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews ; at the same time as to the Jews, for we assume that it was on the night of his birth that the star appeared ; nay, it was made to Herod the King, and to the chief priests and scribes, by these Gentiles.

The Magi, who acknowledged the infant of Bethlehem as the Christ, were the first-fruits of the Gentiles ; and the devout imagination of the Gentile Christians delighted to dwell upon the incident. It assumed that the number of the Magi was three, answering to the three gifts ; that they were kings ; that one was an Asiatic, one an Ethiopian, one a European ; thus making them more strikingly symbolic of the three races of mankind, and the three

quarters of the world. It attributed a symbolical meaning to the three gifts :—

“ Sacred gifts of mystic meaning :
Incense doth their God disclose,
Gold the King of kings proclaimeth,
Myrrh his sepulchre foreshows.”

The painter, perhaps, does rightly in retaining this traditional treatment of the subject, on the ground that his business is to present to our minds all the inner significance of the history ; but in studying the life of our Lord we must distinguish between this symbolic treatment of its incidents and the actual facts of history.

Among the early paintings in the Roman catacombs, the Adoration of the Magi is a favourite subject. In the system of parallels which they delighted to draw between subjects of the two Testaments, the deliverance of the three children from Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace was the parallel subject with this Adoration of the Magi. It helps us to see the prophetic aspect of the latter, and the encouragement it gave to the Christians for the first three centuries. In times of persecution, the picture of the three Israelites delivered from the hand of the Babylonian king encouraged the Christian to be true to his God ; and the picture of the three Gentile kings worshipping the infant Saviour was a prophecy and assurance that the time should come when the “ Kings

of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents, the Kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him" (Ps. lxxii. 10, 11). "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship" (Is. xlix. 7 ; see also lx. 9-17).

Nor is the prophecy yet fulfilled or its encouragement no longer needed. The kings and nations of the world have not yet acknowledged the kingship of Christ, rather the nations of Christendom seem to be revolting from Him. We may still be encouraged by the prophecy of the Adoration of the Magi. They were the first-fruits of a harvest which shall yet surely be gathered in. "Why do the nations rage together, and the heathen imagine a vain thing?" "All kings *shall* fall down before him, all nations *shall* do him service."

CHAPTER X.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

HE Magi, being warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod, returned to their own country by another way. Herod's design of identifying, through the Magi, his infant rival in the kingdom, having failed, he proceeded to take his measures with characteristic vigour and unscrupulousness.

We conclude that the result of the inquiries which Herod had made of the Magi was that the star had appeared to them something less than two years before, and that its appearance indicated the time of the birth. Herod, accordingly, gave orders that all the children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood of two years old and under should be killed, so as to ensure the death of the unknown child in the general slaughter.

Bethlehem was only a village, and it has been computed that not more than ten to fifteen children could have perished by Herod's order; a small act of ferocity for him who in his own family had slain a wife whom he passionately loved, a father-in-law, a

brother-in-law, a brother, and three sons. We know, from Josephus, that at this time bodily pain and mental anxiety had wrought him to a state of almost insane ferocity. For, a few months afterwards, on his deathbed, knowing that all Judea would rejoice at their deliverance from his tyranny, he commanded all the principal men of the entire Jewish nation, wheresoever they lived, on pain of death, to come to him where he lay dying at Jericho. And when they came he had them imprisoned in the Hippodrome; and gave orders to his sister and her husband, that as soon as he was dead, before the news of his death was made public, they should surround the Hippodrome with soldiers, and massacre all who were in it; in order that the mock mourning of the nation for his death might be turned into real mourning because of their own dead.

But it is not the mere brutality which slew a dozen children in order to ensure the death of one, which makes the special heinousness of the act. It is the deliberate intention to slay the Messiah. Granted that Herod knew nothing of the divinity of Jesus, or of his spiritual character as Saviour of the world, he did know that the Messiah was the One promised in a long series of prophecies, whose advent had been long looked for by the nation as of One who was at their head to win a universal monarchy, and to introduce into the world a Golden Age of prosperity and

happiness. There was a universal expectation, among both Jews and Gentiles, of the immediate advent of such a king. Herod clearly believed that the Child whose birth had been signified to these wise men by the portentous star was this expected Messiah ; and he deliberately intended to identify him by means of the Magi and slay him, and, failing this, he recklessly sought to include him in the massacre of the innocents. For the Herod family had, it is said, the ambition to use the Jewish race and the Jewish religion as the means of building up a great Eastern Empire. The successful growth of the power of Herod from the subordinate government of Galilee to a monarchy extending almost as widely as the kingdom of Solomon seemed to sanction the ambitious idea. And the temper of the Jews—their impatience under the Roman yoke, their fanatical valour, their expectation of a career of conquest — seemed to encourage the expectation of a still grander future. The design over which the mind of Herod brooded seems like a debased rival of the Messianic idea which filled the mind of the nation with grander though still inadequate aspirations. Herod seems deliberately to have regarded the Messiah as a rival, and to have sought to slay him in the dynastic interests of his own family :—“this is the heir, come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” Herod was the first great Antichrist.

Herod's disturbance was all for nothing, and his wicked precautions, had they succeeded, would have been not only a crime, but a blunder. His rival was, indeed, to be king of the Jews, but his kingdom was not to be of this world. He would have reigned without depriving Herod of his crown. Nay, had Herod deferred to the will of God, and done that which he acknowledged with his own mouth to be his duty when he said to the Magi "I will come and worship him also," it might have been the beginning of the conversion of that proud stubborn will; it might have kept the temporal crown on the head of his posterity; at least, it would have secured for himself an unfading crown in heaven.

Not only a crime, but a blunder; nay, we should think it sheer madness in Herod, recognising the Child of Bethlehem as the subject of the prophecies, to suppose that he could hinder the accomplishment of the counsels of God; but that all who sin are similarly blind, when, knowing the will of God, they strive against it, and think to get any good in spite of Him. It is not without reason that the Scripture speaks of sin as folly and madness also, and true wisdom as synonymous with holiness.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.



THE providence of God watches over all of us, and special providences probably occur to all of us sometimes. We should expect that special providences, even miracles perhaps, would attend every step of the life of Jesus. And in fact the history so far has been a series of marvels. Though we observe that while the supernatural has preceded the birth of the holy child and surrounded his cradle, nothing supernatural has manifested itself in the child himself. He is a natural human child, reposing peacefully in the midst of angel choirs and human worshippers, apparently unconscious of it all. We are not surprised, therefore, when we are told that while a dream warned the Magi not to return to Herod, another dream bade Joseph "arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt" (Matt. ii. 13).

Or, if we are surprised, it is that we should have expected some striking judgment would befall the wicked king, or that some miracle would turn aside the swords of his soldiers. Whereas what really happened was that Jesus fled to save his life from Herod. We gather, in passing, this lesson for ourselves, that the prudent evasion of danger is one of God's providential ways of delivering us from danger, as our industry and foresight are one of His ways of providing for our needs.

Again, when we look forward to the subsequent life of Christ, we see and note the remarkable fact that no miracle was ever wrought on his behalf. He could have commanded the stones of the wilderness to become bread, he could have prayed and his father would have sent him more than twelve legions of angels in the garden, but did not. And we realise the truth that he came to work miracles on behalf of others, but not to have miracles wrought on his behalf, "he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; he came to live the ordinary human life, under its ordinary conditions of weakness, danger, suffering, and sorrow. So now when he is in danger he flees from it.

The Evangelist draws our attention to the fact that this fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea (xi. 1). "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Hosea's direct allusion is to Israel's deliverance from Egypt,

and the Evangelist's quotation of his words points out to us the remarkable historical analogy between the life of God's people and the life of Jesus. As Israel was driven by famine out of Canaan to seek refuge in Egypt, and returned out of Egypt to dwell in the Promised Land, so our Lord was driven by Herod's persecution to seek safety in Egypt and returned to dwell at Nazareth.

For "when Herod was dead behold an angel of the Lord appeared again in a dream to Joseph, in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel for they are dead which sought the young child's life."

And Joseph obeyed the intimation. It would seem to have been his intention to return to Judea, probably to Bethlehem. But "when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither,"—Archelaus was known to be of a cruel disposition; and he showed it by putting to death 3,000 Jews in the Temple, soon after his accession,—“and being warned by God in” another “dream, he turned aside and went into Galilee,” which was under the rule of the milder Antipas, and took up his abode again at Nazareth.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLY CHILDHOOD.

FTER the return from Egypt we have seen that Joseph was turned from his intention of settling in Judea, and returned with Mary and the Holy Child to their former home in the little mountain village of Nazareth; there the childhood and youth of our blessed Lord were passed.

All that is told us of that "wondrous childhood" is contained in one brief sentence:—

"The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled¹ with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke ii. 40).

He grew physically in body, and the immaterial part of his human nature, his human spirit, also developed vigorously. This is not so difficult to understand, it seems merely to declare the natural healthy growth of the child of Mary.

But the next sentence makes us aware of the difficulties which really lay hidden in the former sentence. He grew in wisdom, *i.e.* in knowledge and

¹ The word in the original is in the present tense, and implies gradual growth in fulness of wisdom.

experience, and the sound judgment which comes of reflection on knowledge and experience. How could He be less than omniscient? Yet it is clear that the Divine nature controlled itself by self-imposed conditions of union with the human nature. "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us" as one of us; God became man and lived as man, imposing upon himself the necessary limitations of that wonderful relation. As He grew bodily from the smallness and helplessness of infancy into the full stature and vigour of manhood, so intellectually He grew from the vacuity of an infant's mind to the range of knowledge and intellectual vigour of His manhood.

Still more we read "the grace of God was upon Him." So entirely was He man, that though He was God also, yet His human nature received that gift of God's grace which human nature needs in order to its perfectness. Theologians tell us that that which was breathed into the nostrils of Adam at his creation was not merely the animal soul and human spirit, but that it included also a gift of divine grace, an in-breathing of the Holy Spirit, which is, as it were, the essence of the life of man; and that it was the withdrawal of this gift, consequent upon man's sin, which left him with his faculties enfeebled, discordant, tainted with corruption. It was declared of John the Baptist that he should be "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb" (Luke i. 15). John said of

Jesus, "God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John iii. 34). His human nature, then, though conceived without sin, though perfect, yet needed and received the grace of God, though all the while intimately and inseparably united with the divine nature in the hypostatic union.

The humanity of Jesus was a true human nature ; was developed and acted according to the laws of human nature ; united, indeed, with the divine nature, but not altered by it ; showing forth the divinity, indeed, but after a truly human manner. Otherwise we fall into the heresy that the divine and human natures were confused into a third nature *sui generis*. It is true the divinity constantly manifests itself in ways which we could not anticipate, and cannot reduce to rule, but we must hold that, however the divine was united with the human, and however it manifested itself, it was in ways consistent with the true and real human nature, and natural human living and human thinking and human acting, of Jesus of Nazareth. We know so little of the divine nature that we cannot predicate its mode of acting through the human nature ; but we do know a good deal of human nature, and we must hold fast that side of the truth, that Jesus was really man.

This will be the place to call special attention to the truth that He whose human growth and development we are tracing had received our human nature

in its entirety and perfectness. Let us consider our human nature. Every man possesses a certain bodily organisation, as head, heart, limbs ; and every man has also certain faculties of mind, as thought, reason, affection, conscience, will. But different men have these common qualities in different proportions. One is taller or stronger than another ; one has less scope or acuteness of intellect than another ; one has a more affectionate disposition ; another a stronger will. It is these differences between one man and another, partly natural, partly the result of education, which constitute what we call character.

Our Blessed Lord took our human nature free from any taint of hereditary corruption or weakness ; he took it in its entirety and perfection, each faculty perfect in itself—perfect reason, perfect affections, perfect will—and all in harmonious proportion and just equipoise.

Still, though perfect beyond our experience of human nature, it was human nature ; our Lord was perfect man, but He was man. He grew in body, mind, and spirit, and was gradually filled with wisdom. He grew up, as children and boys grow up, naturally, subject to influences from the things and persons around them.

It seems clear that Joseph and Mary pursued no exceptional method in their training of his childhood. He seemed to them a merely human child. They

knew, indeed, that angelic messages, and prophetic utterances, and signs and wonders, had revealed that He should be the greatest of the children of men, the Desire of all nations, the Messiah, the Saviour, but they knew no more than this ; and though, no doubt, they watched over him with the tenderest solicitude, and fulfilled to the utmost the duty of wise parents in his training, yet it was by no exceptional methods.

One great part of a child's education lies in the unconscious influence exercised upon him by his natural surroundings, and by the character of those among whom he grows up.

The child Jesus grew up in a secluded mountain village, among picturesque hills and valleys and fields, strewn in spring-time with a profusion of flowers, among vineyards and olive-yards and plots of wheat. From the hill-tops above the village were views of grand varied historic scenery ; snow-crowned Lebanon and Hermon in the distance, the broad plain of Esdraelon close by, with the Kishon winding through it, the great battle-field of the Holy Land, bounded on the south by the hills of Ephraim, all full of great historic memories. The Lake of Capernaum, with its teeming commercial population, was not far off over the north-eastern hills, and gleams of the Great Sea could be caught on the western horizon. Amid such natural surroundings the child grew up, in the simple, unsophisticated humanness of Eastern village life,

under the influence of the wise and good Joseph, and of the sweet, pure, thoughtful, young mother.

The more deliberate and systematic instruction and training which we call education, and which helps so largely in the development of a human being is worth a few moments' thought.

Where much thought and care have been bestowed upon methods of education we find various systems adopted.

The curriculum of Jewish education consisted of a study of the Sacred Books. And they afforded the materials for a wide, and deep, and true education. Let it be remembered that the Sacred Books of the Jews comprised a whole literature; the literature, not of one age, but of all the ages from Abraham to Christ; it included history, philosophy, poetry, law, religion. No nation in the world at that period possessed a literature which offered so grand a subject of study, so favourable a material for the training of a great man, as that divinely inspired and divinely preserved literature of the great Hebrew race. No people at that period had so true and complete a knowledge of human history, so true and profound a philosophy, grander models of poetry; above all, no other nation had that which is the key to all right knowledge and true wisdom, the knowledge of God, and of man's relations to God, to nature, and to his fellow-men. It was a nation which had a grand past

to be proud of; and though at present held under a foreign yoke, it resented the indignity, and was sustained by the confident expectation in the immediate future of the achievement of a universal monarchy, which should last so long as the world endured. The consciousness of a great ancestry and a great destiny is no mean help to the formation of greatness of character.

These Sacred Books, then, and these traditions, and these national sentiments, afforded the material of the education of a Jewish youth. The Rabbis discouraged the study of Gentile learning. It was an innovation, and an evidence of unusual freedom of thought, when Gamaliel, a little later, allowed and encouraged the Jewish youth to read the Greek and Latin writers. But Greek was the common language of commerce in Galilee in the time of which we are speaking; Greek civilisation and literature had been disseminated all over the East, and no intelligent, thoughtful person could well be ignorant of the great outlines of Greek teaching.

We have abundant evidence that our Lord had a familiar, thorough, and profound knowledge of the Sacred Books; there is no reason to think that He was less acquainted with the Greek language and Greek thought than Peter and John and James, who wrote their Epistles in Greek.

Then we must bear in mind what manner of child

He was whose training and education we are considering. When we say that He possessed every human faculty in perfect and harmonious development, we are saying that He was a child of great genius and of unexampled "many-sidedness"; when we add that He was as perfect in affections and in will as in intellect, we recognise that we have no deductions to make for the flaws of temper, and the waywardnesses which so often reduce great genius to sterility. We have a vast genius, a perfect moral character, and firm will, untainted by any hereditary or acquired imperfection; and quickened and invigorated by the grace of God to the keenest edge and finest temper. We have our human nature in the highest possible manifestation of what man is capable of being. It is the Child of the highest endowments and noblest promise which the race ever bore, who is thus growing up, in silence and obscurity, in the home of Joseph, in the mountain village of Nazareth.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE SON OF THE LAW."

IN the course of our study of the Gospels we arrive now at a fact of the most remarkable kind.

We have seen how fully the history of the Nativity, with the group of events around it, is related—the Annunciation and Birth of the Forerunner, the Annunciation to the Virgin, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Shepherds, of the Magi, the Circumcision, the Presentation, the Flight into Egypt, the Return to Nazareth. We shall see hereafter at what length the history of the three years' ministry is told,—the Discourses, Parables, Miracles, Life. Lastly, the history of the Passion and Death is related in continuous and minute detail.

In contrast with this, we find, between the history of the Nativity and the history of the Ministry, a space of thirty years of our Lord's life which the Evangelists leave almost an entire blank.

Not quite a blank; for that point of the Sacred Life when childhood ends and responsibility begins is marked by one incident, which is recorded. More-

over, the period of childhood, on one side of that incident, and the period of manhood on the other, are each summed up in a sentence.

The incident is the visit to Jerusalem at twelve years old. The sentence which sums up the childhood is that which we considered in the last chapter:—"The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke ii. 39-40), and the sentence which sums up the manhood is this, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,"—which will occupy us in the next chapter.

It is this incident of the visit to Jerusalem which we have now to consider. St. Luke relates it as follows:—

"Now His parents went up to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when Jesus was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the Feast" (Luke ii. 41, &c.).

There is a time in a boy's life when the mind begins to look abroad beyond the circle of home, when the affections begin to bud, and the will to assert itself; in short, when the boy develops into the young man. It was the custom of the Jews, when their boys attained this age, to carry them up to Jerusalem at one of the feasts. There they were presented to the Rabbis, in one of the chambers of the Temple, to be questioned as to their religious

knowledge, and further instructed in it. Then they were brought into the Temple, to take part in its solemn worship. And from that time they entered upon all the obligations, and were entitled to all the privileges, of adult members of the commonwealth of Israel.

This formal admission of the youthful Jew into the full privileges of the covenant was not based upon any commandment of the law. It was an ecclesiastical regulation which those "who sat in Moses' seat" had made, or it was a religious custom which had gradually grown up, out of a conviction of its practical usefulness for edification. Our Lord's obedience to it, therefore, assumes an important significance. In his circumcision, we saw he submitted to the first precept of the law, and accepted the obligation to obey the whole law; but here he dutifully observes an ecclesiastical regulation, and so sets us the example of that deference to lawful ecclesiastical authority which he afterwards broadly enunciated in the sentence:—"The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do" (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3).

This, then, was the purpose for which, when Jesus was twelve years old, his parents brought him up to Jerusalem. It was such a crisis in the spiritual life as Confirmation and First Communion are with us, and this, perhaps, would have been enough to account

for its being recorded by the Evangelist, even if nothing remarkable had occurred in connexion with it.

But something remarkable did occur. “When they had fulfilled the days,” viz., the eight days of the Festival, “as they returned homewards the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey, and they sought him among” the travelling groups of “their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him;” looking anxiously among the people they met, and making inquiries from time to time. “And it came to pass that after three days,”—according to the Jewish way of speaking, we should say on the third day, for they travelled homeward one day and returned to Jerusalem the next, and some time on the third day,—“they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Some of the popular pictures of the subject represent the boy Jesus seated in the midst, while the venerable Rabbis stand round receiving his teaching. It is a conception of the subject not borne out by the narrative, and quite out of harmony with our Lord’s character; and it conveys a lesson quite inconsistent with

the true lesson of the whole incident. The youth had, probably, with the freedom of Eastern manners, joined some group of learned men as they sat in the shade of one of the cloisters of the Temple, and listened to their conversation, and, at length, by asking questions took part in it.

“All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” It is wonderfully interesting to watch the development of children’s minds; to see how the great problems of life, the mysteries of the unseen and the future, present themselves to their young intelligence. What profound questions they ask, taxing all our wisdom to answer, and often taxing our candour to confess that we cannot answer them. Now and then we meet with a child of especially sweet disposition and thoughtful mind, whose just observations and suggestive questions delight and instruct us.

Such an exceptional child Jesus was. Not a precocious child, which implies some abnormal development, or some injudicious forcing of the intellect, but a boy who possessed all human qualities in their highest perfection. A modest, ingenuous boy, but a boy of the highest genius. Brought up hitherto in the seclusion of a mountain village, he has found himself for ten days past in the stately streets of the sacred city, crowded with multitudes of his countrymen from all parts of the world. He has seen, for

the first time, the imposing magnificence of the Temple; he has joined with deep spiritual insight and fervour in the awful solemnity of the sacrifices. The bud which has been long slowly swelling in the shade, bursts at once into bloom when brought out into the sun.

He had listened to the teachings of his home; he had learnt what further could be learnt from the addresses of the village fathers in the synagogue of Nazareth; but here he is at the source of the theological teaching of his Church. Hillel, Simeon, and Gamaliel were Rabbis whose learning and wisdom have gained them a place among the very foremost names on the roll of the learned men of the Jewish nation. We can imagine the eager interest with which the boy Jesus would listen to their deep learning, their practised acuteness and subtlety, their ripe experience; and would propound the questions which he had pondered in his own mind; and we can realise the generous pleasure with which the great Rabbis would recognise the clear insight, the untaught justness of thought, and elevation of sentiment, and would catch glimpses of the purity and sweetness of disposition; in short, the wonderful genius, the spiritual grandeur, of this Galilean boy.

But it would be utterly out of harmony with the character of our Lord to suppose that he was teaching the doctors. The Fathers of the Church, from the

earliest of them downwards, have understood the incident otherwise, "Not teaching, but hearing," says Origen; "Not teaching them, but asking them questions," says Gregory the Great, who says again, "It is His will as a boy to learn by asking questions, who, by the might of His divinity, gave their science to these very doctors."

The superficial objection, that he was God, and knew all things, and could teach these doctors, but could not be taught by them, has already been disposed of. He was man with man's ignorance, and however perfect as man, needed to learn like other men. The relations of the divine nature to the human nature in their union in Christ are unknown to us; we can only watch with reverence the way in which we sometimes seem to see in Jesus a consciousness of his divinity, and sometimes seem to witness a manifestation of the divinity in his words and acts. It is by pondering the subject again and again, on each occasion when the history brings it before us, that we come to realise more vividly, and to hold more firmly, the truth of the perfect Godhead and the perfect manhood united in the Person of Christ.

The sequel of the present narrative opens before us at once one of the profoundest of these occasions. "When they saw Him they were amazed." And his mother uses a mother's privilege, and gently remon-

strates with him on the anxiety he had caused:—
 “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”

The remonstrance sheds a flood of light upon the training of the infancy. He had not been treated as one whose actions were never to be interfered with, one who was above a father’s control and a mother’s remonstrance. We confidently infer that the training of his infancy had been that of any other sweet and holy child in a wise and good family.

Our Lord’s answer is not so easy to understand. “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?”¹

We note the different meaning of the word “Father” in the question and reply. We learn from Mary’s question, “Thy father and I have sought thee,” that it had been the habit of the household to speak of Joseph as the father of Jesus. But our Blessed Lord in his reply uses it in a different sense, “Knew you not that I must be in my Father’s house?” She uses the word, according to the conventional

¹ The words in the original are *ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου*, in the — of my Father. Many ancient authorities translate them in the house of my Father; which seems to agree better with the whole drift of the answer—“How is it that ye sought me? You should have known where to find me—in my Father’s house.” The words above have been adopted in the Revised Version.

habit of the household, for Joseph. His reply carries her back to the thought of Him who was really His Father; to the day when it was said to her, "Therefore that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

We have here, then, the record of his consciousness of his own Divinity; and we may suppose the first intimation he had given of his consciousness of it. Are we to suppose that Mary and Joseph had told the child of the miraculous conception and the wondrous birth? These are not subjects we talk to children about. Are we to suppose that they had filled his mind with ambitious dreams by telling him that he was marked out by all the wonders which surrounded his birth to be the Messiah? If we think of the education which Queen Victoria and Prince Albert gave their children we shall see that it is the wise aim of those whose children are born to high destinies to bring them up modestly and naturally; we suppose, therefore, that this was the first intimation which Jesus, now that he had crossed the line which divides boyhood from manhood, gave of his consciousness of his own true parentage.

Ah! what thoughts must have been awakened in the hearts of Mary and Joseph. Twelve long years had elapsed since that wondrous time, and its memories were not forgotten, indeed, but had faded into the background of their uneventful life. All

that long time no new wonders had happened ; the infant had grown into a sweet and holy child, a pure and noble boy, but their life had been bounded by the mountain valley of Nazareth, and nothing had broken its calm tenor. The apocryphal gospels, indeed, talk of the miracles of the childhood of Jesus, and the wonders which surrounded him, but they are clearly the inventions of the natural human taste for the marvellous ; and we mention them only because they make more striking, by contrast, the fact of the thorough naturalness of the real childhood of the Lord.

“ They understood not the saying which he spake unto them.” They knew that he was the son of the miraculous conception, they believed that he was the destined Messiah, but they did not (in all probability) know that he was divine. This ignorance of theirs helps us, again, to realise the perfect humanness of his childhood. They knew that his conception had been miraculous, they believed in his great future destinies, but meantime there was no great present awe to interfere with the perfect naturalness of their relations to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OBSCURE LIFE.

“E went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them. (But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart), and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke ii. 51, 52).

He went down to Nazareth with them.

Not only the infancy and boyhood, from birth to twelve years old, but also the early manhood, from twelve to thirty, those years when the character is being fully formed and settled, were spent in the seclusion of the mountain village. Let us try to realise what that obscure life at Nazareth was like.

And first of all we have to clear away some misapprehensions which commonly exist in the English mind, naturally regarding that life from the standpoint of its own prepossessions, with respect to the supposed poverty, and lowly social condition, and ignoble calling, of the holy family.

If the ordinary better-class English Christian would be perfectly candid he would confess that he never quite overcomes the painful impression produced on

his mind by the fact that our Lord was born among "the lower classes"; the fact carries with it, to his mind, a presumption of inferiority of race. And after all that can be said about it, the fact remains that there is something in pedigree, and that the "well born" have by nature a more refined organisation than the "low born." In other words, to be of the lower classes carries with it a presumption of inferior natural endowments, and therefore of inferior capacity for the attainment of the highest type of refined humanity. The English people are supposed to be made up of an inferior conquered and a superior conquering race. The upper classes are supposed to represent the fiery chivalrous refined Norman, and the lower classes the slow and heavy Saxon. The truth is that the two races have long since so thoroughly intermingled, that the distinction of race does not practically exist among us; but the feelings and habits belonging to such a distinction of race have to a great extent survived, and it is still largely taken for granted that the lower classes are of a naturally inferior race and type.

But, however it may be in England, there was nothing of this distinction of race, or of this feeling between the upper and lower classes, in Jewish society. They were all of one blood. They all claimed Abraham as their father. One Jew was of one tribe and another of another, but the progenitors of the

tribes were twelve brothers. The noble and the vine-dresser, the great lady and the gleaner in the barley field, were all of the same blood. We can perhaps best understand this state of society by comparison with the highland clans; the chief of a great clan was recognised as a noble among nobles, but all the men of his clan were his cousins, and, by birth, of as good blood, and as proud of their good blood, as he. The nearest approach to an aristocratic caste among the Jews at this time was the priestly family, which was supported by the labours of the rest of the people, and whose chief had been the virtual ruler of the nation from the return from the captivity to the time of Herod. The only other family which could put forth any hereditary claim to special distinction was the family of David, which had been the royal family of Judah down to the captivity, and from which, moreover, the Messiah was to be born.

But Joseph and Mary and Jesus were of the family of David; and, if we do not misunderstand the genealogy of St. Matthew, Jesus was the representative of the family, and not only David's son, but David's heir. That their pedigree, as of the house of David, was well known and recognised is evident from the fact that they went up to Bethlehem to be enrolled at the census "because they were of the house and lineage of David." That little family of Nazareth, though poor and obscure, was at least of

one of the great races of mankind, and of the ancient royal family of that race.

In the case of this family of Nazareth, then, there was, as a matter of fact, no inferiority of race, and no sentiment of inferiority, which might diminish their own self-respect or lead others to treat them as inferior.

Again, as to their supposed ignoble calling. Joseph, we are expressly told, was a carpenter, and Jesus in all probability was so also: trades tend to be hereditary in the East, and Jesus is called "the carpenter" (Mark vi. 3). The average Englishman has an illiberal prejudice against handicrafts, which did not exist in the Jewish mind.

It was one of their national customs that every man was taught a trade; probably not merely as a prudential precaution, so that if necessary he could earn his living by it, but as a part of his education.

Thus Saul of Tarsus, the son apparently of wealthy parents, who had received a liberal education at Jerusalem from the most famous Rabbi of his time, had learned a trade and fell back upon it for subsistence when his conversion had brought about his temporal ruin. Some of the most famous of the Jewish Rabbis practised handicrafts as their regular occupation. It was not possible, therefore, for the Jews to have the feeling that the mere fact of a man exercising a handicraft put him in a low social caste.

Again, as to the poverty which we think so humiliating a circumstance in the condition of the holy family. It is one of the bad features of our present state of civilisation and society that we think poverty in itself an evil and a disgrace; it is in a plutocracy that poverty is loss of caste; in an aristocracy a gentleman is a gentleman, however poor. This scorn of poverty is unphilosophical and unchristian; and though it may obtain among ill-regulated minds at all times in all countries, it did not exist in the East in the time of our Lord so generally and in so exaggerated a form as among us.

The study of that household of Nazareth may teach us all a needed lesson. It may be that our climate and soil and social habits compel us to surround ourselves with appliances in houses and gardens, clothing and food, objects of beauty and sources of amusement which we obtain only at the cost of incessant exertion; whereas in the East the ease with which sufficient shelter, food, and clothing can be obtained; the possession of an air, a sky, a "nature" in which to live is delight enough, allows men to be poor and their lives simple, and gives them leisure for thought, for poetry, for religion.

An Eastern house and its furniture and *ménage* might content a Stoic. An iron pot, an iron "griddle" for baking the flat bread, and a handful of charcoal, are sufficient for its simple cookery; two or three earthen jars containing meal, sour milk, and water,

are all its stores. The one living-room of the family is amply furnished if the earthen floor has been raised at one end of the room for a divan, with a strip of carpet laid upon it. A round brass tray and a bowl in which to serve the simple meal, a spoon to eat it with, and an earthenware vase of water of which all may drink, are the table equipage. A chest in one corner may contain the best dresses, and the two or three trinkets of the family; a bundle laid upon it contains the thin mattresses and coverings, which at sunset are carried up a rude ladder and spread on the flat house-top, which constitutes the common bed-chamber of the whole family.¹

But this kind of life, accepted as God's disposition of our lot, carrying with it no sense of humiliation or privation, is not *poverty*; it becomes poverty when it is borne with dissatisfaction and envy, or when there is anxious scheming of mind and wearing labour of body in the endeavour to force one's way out of it. But a life so simple and frugal may yet be contented and cheerful, bright and happy; may be full of refined enjoyments, full of intellectual richness and dignity; may be spiritually grand and elevated. Such a life may be the life of a philosopher, the life of a Christian; it was the life of the Son of Man.

¹ The wealthy lady of Shunem, wishing to make hospitable arrangements for Elisha, said, "Let us make a little chamber on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick" (2 Kings iv. 10).

Although the Scripture is silent on the history of these eighteen years, yet we may gather a note or two which will help us to realise the progress of the sacred life.

Some time during those years Joseph, the guardian of the sacred childhood, died. Thenceforth the mother and the son alone formed the humble household (for we accept the primitive tradition, that those who are called in one place the "brothers" of our Lord were really his cousins) Let us try to realise the daily life of that household. All great men (and regarding our Lord's humanity we recognise in Him a great man—the greatest of the race)—all great men, it is said, have owed much to their mothers. We will not enlarge on the subject, but let us think for a moment of the character of Mary, pure, sweet, and gentle, with a deep thoughtfulness to which the Gospels often direct attention,—“Mary kept all these things [about the Nativity] and pondered them in her heart”; and again about the twelve years old incidents, “His mother kept all these sayings in her heart” (Luke ii. 19, 51), with a grandeur of spirit which breaks forth in the Magnificat; with a spiritual insight which anticipated the first miracle; with the heroic devotion which stood beside the cross. Think, O you sons, what such a mother must have been to such a Son; and think, O you mothers, what such a Son to such a mother!

CHAPTER XV.

“HE WAS SUBJECT UNTO THEM.”

“**H**E went down with them, and came to Nazareth, *and was subject unto them.*”

Subject to Mary and to Joseph. The two cases are different. Mary was his mother and had that sacred natural claim to the obedience of her son. Joseph was but his foster-father. Let us realise what this going down to Nazareth with them, and subjection to them, implies. Realise the obscure village life, the daily round of lowly toil, the narrow circle of the cottage home.

When we read of God the Son emptying himself of “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was,” and becoming man, the transaction is so beyond the range of our experience, and the contrast so transcends the measure of our limited being, that we fail to realise the condescension, the humility. When we see the Divine Child cradled in the rude manger in the stable of the inn, we recognise that this was, humanly speaking, a mere accidental occurrence, and the Divine Child unconscious of the strange incongruity. But when we see the boy of

transcendent genius reared in a peasant's home ; the young man of royal descent and of grand destinies, sharing the daily labours of a carpenter's shop, and playing the part of a dutiful son to Joseph, his foster-father, then we have perhaps an exhibition of humility and obedience which our habits of thought enable us better to appreciate ; and we gaze with amazement at the son of David and the Son of God living thus from infancy to manhood.

Meditating upon it, we recognise that humility, submission, patience, obedience, are as striking features of our Lord's life at this period, as transcendent wisdom and miraculous power were of the period of the ministry, or meek endurance of the Passion.

Subordination is the rule of creation : it makes the harmony of the universe ; without it is chaos. Higher and lower, superior and inferior, command and obedience, are the order of God. The Divine Three Persons, are co-eternal and co-equal, and none is greater or less than another, but there is subordination among them. The Father is the source and fountain of Deity ; the Son is begotten of the Father ; the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. The Father sends the Son, and the Son is sent by the Father, and the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son. Among the angelic hosts there are archangel and angel, superior and inferior, command and obedience. The inevitable necessities of human nature

enforce subordination, so long as there are mothers and infants, grown men and boys. Society means an organisation of men ; and organisation implies subordination. In the Church "he made some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." In the mystical body some members are more, some less, honourable. In the little world of each man's being there must, for his well-being, be command and obedience ; the muscles obedient to the nerves, the passions to the reason, and all subject to the will. Humility is not meanness ; obedience is not degrading. Humility and obedience are the great foundations of a perfect character ; the bonds of harmony and power and greatness in the individual and in society, in the Church, and in the hierarchy of heaven.

We shall find, on consideration, that as there are in Christ's humility two phases, — God humbling himself to be man, and the man humbling himself to low estate,—so we shall see our Lord's obedience in four different categories. Obedience to God, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" : religious obedience, in his submission to circumcision : ecclesiastical obedience, in his conformity to the custom of catechising and first sacrifice : parental obedience to Mary, and civil obedience to Joseph.

We shall find, moreover, something taught by our Lord's independent action in remaining behind in

Jerusalem, and in his reply to his mother ; viz., the limitation of obedience, to God first, and then the other obligations in their order.

Again, we learn what obedience is. It is not merely a natural deference to those whom we recognise as greater or wiser than ourselves ; Joseph and Mary were not greater, nor wiser (at least, as he grew up to manhood) than Jesus ; but in God's providence they had been put in a position of authority over him, and therefore he obeyed them. Origen points the lesson : "We see that the lesser is often placed over the greater, that he who is in authority may not be swollen with pride because he is in authority, but that he may recognise that his better is subject to him, as Jesus was subject to Joseph." It is God who putteth down one and setteth up another. "We must needs be subject" to those set over us in God's providence "for conscience' sake." All rightful authority comes from God, and is to be exercised for the welfare of the subjects and for God's glory. We obey those whom God, in nature or in providence, sets over us, *because* He has set them over us. And so all true obedience is really paid to God, in the person of his representatives to us, in the family and society, in the State and in the Church.

Seeing that of all that life of preparation, from his nativity to his entry on his Messiahship and ministry, these few words are all which are told us of his moral

character, they are the more emphatic, and demand the more searching and prolonged study. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Humility and obedience, then, are clearly the traits of character thus set in such emphatic relief before us. They are the foundations of every noble and perfect character. They needed to be laid broad and deep to sustain the superstructure of the character of the perfect man, the exemplar of the race. And we men need to study the lesson, and never more than at the present time. For want of humility and want of obedience are among the wide-spread faults of our age and country. We find everywhere an impatience of obscurity, an impatience of control; everybody craving and striving to be rich, to be distinguished; everybody scorning subordination, refusing to acknowledge any man as master. Jesus came to set us an example of that which is noblest and best in human character and life. This does not mean that we are mechanically to copy the details of his life; but to adopt its principles, and apply them in the circumstances of ours. We are not to suppose that Jesus did all this merely for the purpose of teaching us a lesson of humility and obedience, and patient preparation in obscurity. No, Christ did not do things merely to furnish an example. He lived the life which naturally became him, he said the words and did the deeds which were

proper to him, and we are permitted to look on and learn. This obscurity was his natural preparation for his work, this humility and obedience were the natural discipline of his manhood. "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered." "He was made perfect through suffering." Very likely He often looked forward during these years of patient training, not with impatience but with longing, for the Divine signal to go forth and begin His work. "His heart burned within him," "He felt straitened," until the time came. What a rebuke to our impatience, and rashness, and self-will! For all those thirty years the Son of God was humble, obedient, patient, and silent; and waited till God gave Him the sign.

CHAPTER XVI.

HIS GROWTH INTO MANHOOD.

“He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

THIS brief statement sums up the eighteen years of our Lord's life which lie between his visit to Jerusalem at twelve years old, and the commencement of his public life. Important years in every life, during which the child is growing into the man, and character is setting, and the powers are maturing, and the question is deciding what manner of man he will be, whether he will resolutely undertake the work God sent each man into the world to do, or whether he will miss it, or decline it, and make shipwreck of his life.

“He increased . . . in favour with God.”

It is a statement of the same kind as the former one, relating to the period of childhood, that “the grace of God was upon him,” but it adds something to that statement. It tells us that just as any child of man growing up from an innocent childhood into a wise and holy manhood receives grace upon grace, and grows in the love and favour of God, so was it

with the Son of Man. May we not assume that the way in which the statement that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man is connected with the account of his admission to the higher privileges of the Sons of the law, indicates a relation of cause and consequence between the two? "The grace of God was upon him" in his childhood. On the threshold of manhood he is admitted to new means of grace, and these new means of grace, used as they would be by him, naturally produce the result that he "grows in wisdom and in the favour of God."

It is easy to see how all this bears upon the subject of Confirmation. Probably the time for the administration of this Apostolic rite chosen by the Church of England is borrowed from this example of our Lord. And we may certainly point to His example of obedience to the observances of His Church in urging our young people to present themselves for confirmation and first communion; and we may confidently hope as the result of their earnest preparation and devout participation that they also will increase in wisdom as in stature and in favour with God and man.

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" is almost a repetition of the summary of the childhood, "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him"; and they impress

upon us again the continuous natural growth of the Son of man according to the laws of human development. And yet there would be a difference between the two periods, if only the natural difference between the spontaneous development of the child, and the conscious self-cultivation of the youth. We try therefore to picture to ourselves the circumstances of his youth, and reverently to conjecture the natural growth and development of that perfect human mind and character.

We see the acute insight into nature and human life exercised on a larger scale, as the youth begins to range wider afield beyond the limits of his native valley and hills, and to walk with observant eyes among the busy streets of the cities on the western shore of the neighbouring lake,—the royal watering place of Tiberias, the commercial city of Capernaum, and the agricultural towns of the fertile plain.

We follow him three times a year, when, in scrupulous fulfilment of the requirements of the law, he goes up to Jerusalem. Thrice a year, eight¹ days on each occasion he spent in the holy city, receiving to the full all the wisdom, grace, and communion with God which the human soul most capacious of such

¹ From the time of leaving Nazareth to the time of returning would be about fourteen days, three being spent on the journey in each direction.

influences could receive from the divinely-appointed channels of special communion and special grace. Thrice a year he would be brought within reach of the currents of thought which circulated among the inhabitants of the capital, and of the freer, wider range of ideas which the Hellenist Jews brought up with them from all parts of the civilised world. What opportunities for one with the eye which nothing escapes, the intelligence which comprehends at a word, the judgment which distinguishes at a glance the wheat from the chaff, the profound genius which assimilates all knowledge and experience and converts them into wisdom ! His discourses, parables, and proverbial sayings savour as strongly of this universal insight into nature, and experience of life, as the writings of Solomon ; and this comparison with the writings of Solomon helps to bring out more vividly the grander moral tone, the truer, deeper, healthier philosophy of life, of the words of Jesus.

We may venture upon another conjecture as to the human growth and development of the youth of Jesus. The wide knowledge of the Sacred Books, and profound understanding of their meaning, were not, probably, an intuition of the Divine side of his Being. We rather see in this the evidence of many an evening and many a Sabbath spent in reading, and many an hour in meditation ; we may even venture to think that we see indications of a special line of study when

we afterwards read how, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded" to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and afterwards to the ten apostles, "in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."

Again, when we read so often¹ afterwards of his going up into "the mountain" and spending the night in prayer, we confidently conclude that this was no new thing, but the continuation of a habit of vigils spent under the stars upon the hills of Nazareth.

Yes, his preparation for his great office and his great work was not in schools and universities, in cabinets and camps; it was in the calm routine of a simple human life; in the thoughtful contemplation of nature; in the profound study of God's word; in solitary meditations and communings with God under the midnight stars; in the penetrating and wise observation of human life; in mountain village and busy commercial town and grand historic capital; in the earnest fulfilment of all religious duties and the use of all means of grace.

"All great things are done in solitude," says a great thinker.² At least the forty years which Moses spent in the wilderness were a preparation for his great work parallel with these thirty years of silence

¹ Luke vi. 12. Matt. xiv. 23; xv. 29. Luke ix. 28.

² J. P. Richter.

and seclusion in which our Lord "increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man."

Observe that this silent obedient life was part of the work of redemption.

In the first place, it proved that when God made Adam and placed him in the world, he did not place a being of so frail a nature, in circumstances of such temptation that it was unreasonable and unjust to expect him to live an obedient life. For Jesus being very man, a second Adam, living the ordinary human life, under ordinary circumstances, did live an obedient life, and grew continually in the favour of God.

It teaches us a most important lesson, that we are not now so frail, nor are in circumstances of such temptation, that it would be unreasonable and unjust in God to expect us to live consistently holy lives. Without God's grace we could not, but God gives us grace; without great watchfulness and firm resistance to temptation and perseverance in well-doing we could not, but watchfulness and firmness and perseverance are not virtues beyond our reach.

Again, this holy life was part of the work of our redemption; as Jesus was conceived without the taint of hereditary sin, so it was necessary that he should grow up free from actual sin, in order that he might be the spotless lamb of God, fit offering for the sins of the world.

This holy life of humility and obedience is a part of the price paid for our redemption, as well as the Passion and the Cross. "As by (the) one man's disobedience (the) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of (the) one shall (the) many be made righteous." The obedience God requires is not in one or two great heroic crises of life only, but it is the obedience of a life. Christ's meritorious obedience was not merely that of the Incarnation and the cross, but also of this thirty years of a "subject" life. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient" (Phil. ii. 8). "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered," not merely by the sufferings of the Passion, but by the patience and endurance of all his previous life.

Lastly, he increased in favour with man. We picture to ourselves the quiet unpretending fulfilment of all the humble duties and domestic and social charities of life, the frank, unassuming, kindly intercourse with neighbours and friends. We know from the details of his subsequent life that in his wisdom there was no assumption, in his holiness nothing austere and repellent. His unselfishness, his ready sympathy, his many-sidedness, his gentleness, we can readily understand, attracted liking, so long as no claims to a higher character excited doubt, distrust, and opposition. And so "he increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man."

Does it seem wonderful that his character did not excite more attention and remark than is implied here, and elsewhere more plainly stated? But we see so little of any man's life that we can hardly judge of it as a whole; and if we see ever so much of it, it is only the external life we see; of all that inner life of thought and feeling and motive and aim which is the real life we see nothing. Two men may be living side by side, doing almost the same things, leading almost the same external lives, while their inner lives are wide as the poles asunder. To their neighbours all the members of that holy family, perhaps, seemed equally blameless and estimable; while holy as the lives of Joseph and Mary no doubt were, there was the difference of grey dawn and dazzling noon between their lives and his.

	EMPERORS.	KINGS.		PROCURATORS.	HIGH PRIESTS.
B.C. 77 47	... Julius Cæsar	... ... ...	... ... ...	... Antipater	Hyrchanus II.
40 31	... Augustus, Emperor	Herod made king B.C. 40 (d. B.C. 4). ...	... ... ...	... ... ...	Ananelus. Aristobulus, last of the Asmo- neans.
4	NATIVITY OF CHRIST	Archelaus, Judea	Antipas, Galilee	Sabinus. ...	Jesus, son of Phabi. Simon, son of Boethus. Eleazar, son of Boethus.
A.D. 5	... ...	Deposed	Philip, Iturea	Coponius ... Marcus Ambi- vius Annius Rufus	Matthias, son of Theophilus. Joazar, son of Boethus.
14	Tiberius, Emperor	...	... ...	Valerius Gratus	Jesus, son of Sic. Ananus (or Annas). Ismael, son of Phabi. Eleazar, son of Annas. Simon, son of Camithus. Joseph Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas.
25	Baptism of Christ	...	... ...	Pontius Pilate, to 36 AD.	
29	Crucifixion of our Lord.	...	... ...

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF TIBERIUS CÆSAR.

“ Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the High Priests ” (Luke iii. 1, 2).



LONG period of thirty years has elapsed since the days when Herod the Great reigned over the Jews, and Cæsar Augustus commanded that all the world should be taxed, and Christ was born in Bethlehem. In entering upon the second part of his Gospel, St. Luke again fixes his chronology by enumerating the contemporary sovereigns. And this would be enough to enable the contemporaries of the Evangelist at once to synchronise his narrative with the general history of the times, and to recal to their minds the political condition of the countries in which the events of the narrative occurred. But we at this distance of time and place need some research and reflection in order

to prepare our minds with this preliminary knowledge.

In Chapter IV. we sketched the course of the history down to the time of Herod the king, and the political condition of the country in the latter part of his reign. But in the interval of thirty years many important political changes had taken place, as the sentence which we have quoted from St. Luke is enough to indicate. These it will be necessary to explain, and to add a few notes on the religious condition of the people, in order to lay before the reader a sketch of the circumstances in which the public life of the Lord was lived.

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius.” Tiberius succeeded Augustus eighteen years after the birth of Christ (A.D. 14), but made no change in the imperial policy towards the nations of the East, and has no personal connexion with the Gospel history.

About four years after the nativity, the magnificent tyrant Herod died at Jericho in horrible suffering of body and mind. He left a will, by which, subject to its confirmation by Augustus, he named his son Archelaus to succeed him in the kingdom; but he diminished the extent of his dominion by severing from it Galilee and Perea, *i.e.*, the country beyond Jordan, which he left under the name of a tetrarchy

to Antipas ; and erected Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Paneas into another tetrarchy in favour of Philip. The Herodian princes flocked to Rome "to receive their kingdoms and to return," while some went to plead against Archelaus and to say, "We do not wish to have this man to reign over us." In the end the Emperor confirmed the will of Herod, with the exception that he only allowed Archelaus to assume the title of Ethnarch, promising to give him the royal dignity hereafter if he should so reign as to prove himself worthy of it.

The opposition offered to the sovereignty of Archelaus, and the distrust of him shown by Augustus even while giving effect to his father's disposition in his favour, were justified by the event. After nine years of misgovernment, the principal of his subjects sent a formal embassy to Rome to complain of his tyranny. They sustained their accusations before Augustus, and Archelaus was deposed and banished.

Augustus did not replace Archelaus by another king, or add his dominions to those of one of his brothers, but included his government in the Province of Syria, and placed it under the immediate care of a Procurator.¹

¹ The office of a Procurator, strictly speaking, was to act under the governor of a province, as chief of the revenue department ; but sometimes, in a small territory contiguous to a larger

Josephus says that "after the death of Herod and Archelaus the government became an aristocracy, and the high priests were entrusted with a dominion over the nation."¹ The relations of Imperial Rome with the kingdoms of the East are well illustrated by the relations of Imperial England now with the kingdoms of India.

The Procurator of Judea seems to have been immediately appointed by and responsible to the Emperor. He represented the imperial authority. The Roman troops and garrisons were under his command. He only had the power of capital punishment. The taxes were farmed according to the financial system of the Roman Empire. The chief lessors were Roman Equites, who sublet special taxes or special localities to speculators, who again employed inferior agents in the actual collection. The system gave rise to much chicanery and oppression, and the Publicani were always an unpopular class. But in Judea the actual collectors of the taxes, who were mostly Jews, were specially hated as men who lent their services to the conqueror and made gain of the degradation and oppression of their own country.

province, and dependent upon it, the Procurator was the head of the administration, and had full military and judicial authority,—being, however, responsible to the President of the province. The position of the Procurator of Judea partook more of the latter character, though with some special modifications.

¹ "Antiquities," XX., x. 10.

In other respects the Emperor allowed the administration to revert to something like its ancient condition before the Senate had conferred on Herod the title and authority of king. The ancient laws and customs were administered by the High Priest, assisted by the ancient council of the Sanhedrim, a council consisting of the chief priests,—that is, the heads of the twenty-four courses into which the priesthood was divided,—and others of the most influential men of the nation. If, as is probable, the ancient constitution was carried out, there were judges appointed in every town, with Scribes as their assessors, from whom there was an appeal to the Sanhedrim.¹ The Sanhedrim appears to have exercised a considerable ecclesiastical authority over Jews beyond the limits of its civil jurisdiction.

The Procurator usually resided at the new city of Cæsarea, which Herod had built on the sea coast, and thus maintained his communications with Italy. A strong Roman garrison in the Castle of Antonia held possession of Jerusalem. At the great feasts, when Jerusalem was crowded by a vast multitude of Jews, filled with religious and patriotic fervour, the Governor was accustomed to go up with a reinforcement of troops as a precaution against any sudden fanatical outbreak, to which the Jewish temper was liable, and

¹ Josephus, "Antiquities," IV., viii. 14.

took up his residence in the palace of Herod the Great.

The Roman authority was guilty of occasional acts of cruelty ; and, sometimes ignorantly, sometimes wantonly, offended the religious scruples of the Jews ; but on the whole their government of Judea was not systematically oppressive ; the tribute not excessive ; and though the religious and patriotic feeling of the Jews was sore at their subjection to a heathen power, yet their material interests prospered, and they enjoyed a great amount of practical religious and civil liberty. Jerusalem was still the religious capital, not only of the whole of Palestine, but of the great Jewish colonies in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus, and of the multitudes of Jews who were scattered throughout all the commercial cities of the world.

“ In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judea.” He was the fifth who had been appointed since the deposition of Archelaus.¹ He had been appointed by Tiberius in the year A.D. 25-6, and consequently had now been about two years in his government. Two incidents related by Josephus will help us to realise the

¹ Viz., 1, Coconius ; 2, Marcus Ambivius ; 3, Annus Rufus ; 4, Valerius Gratus ; 5, Pontius Pilatus.

character of the man. On his first coming he had ordered the army from Cæsarea to Jerusalem to take up their winter quarters there. Under former Procurators, out of deference to the religious objection of the Jews to have the "likeness of any thing" within the precincts of the Holy City, the troops sent to Jerusalem had carried standards which had not the usual sculptured ornaments; but Pilate sent the troops up with their usual standards, and since they made their entry into the city in the night this was not observed. But as soon as it became known the people came down in multitudes to Cæsarea and beset him day after day entreating that he would withdraw the idolatrous ensigns. Pilate refused, on the ground that it would be derogatory to the dignity of the Emperor. At last, on the sixth day, wearied out with their continual annoyance, he surrounded the crowd of supplicants with his soldiers, and threatened them with immediate death if they did not cease from annoying him and return home. But they threw themselves upon the ground, and bared their necks, and declared that they were willing to die rather than that their law should be transgressed. Pilate was moved by their resolution, and consented to withdraw the objectionable ensigns.¹ On another occasion Pilate was about to construct

¹ Josephus, "Antiquities," XVIII., c. 3, § 1.

an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem, out of the sacred money. The Jews again raised a tumult and insisted that he should abandon his design and "some of them used reproaches and abused the Procurator as crowds of such people usually do." Pilate sent disguised soldiers with concealed daggers among the crowd; and when they refused to disperse and assailed him with reproaches he gave a signal and the soldiers drew their daggers, and, far exceeding their commanders' intentions, killed and wounded many of the people, peaceful spectators as well as the tumultuous mob.

"Annas and Caiaphas being High Priests." Seeing that the High Priest was the head of the administration of Judea, it is not surprising that St. Luke, in fixing the chronology of his history, and glancing at the political condition of the scene of it, should include among the names of the princes and governors who administered the various divisions of the country, the name of the contemporary High Priest who was the chief of the administration of Judea, and whose authority over the Jews, in certain matters, extended far beyond the boundaries of Judea.

But the remarkable statement that there were two High Priests ("Annas and Caiaphas being High Priests") requires explanation.

It is not difficult to conjecture how two men could be said to be High Priests at the same time.

In the reign of David there were two priests of apparently nearly equal authority Zadok and Abiathar (1 Chr. xv. 11; 2 Sam. viii. 17). Indeed it is only from the deposition of Abiathar and the placing of Zadok in his room by Solomon (1 Kings ii. 35) that we learn certainly that Abiathar was the High Priest and Zadok the second. In later times we find two priests, the High Priest and the second priest (2 Kings xxv. 18) of nearly equal dignity; the coadjutor probably helping the High Priest in the administration of his office, and taking his place in the ceremonies of the divine service, if anything prevented the High Priest from officiating in person. Herod and Archelaus more than once deposed a High Priest and appointed another for reasons of political convenience. The Romans could not be expected to be more scrupulous than the Herods, and they not infrequently changed the occupant of the office, which they naturally regarded from its political rather than from its religious side. The Jews themselves, regarding the office from its religious side, probably found a way of mitigating the confusion which might have been caused by the co-existence of several High Priests, by regarding the elder (by creation) of the ex-priests as still High Priest, and the present holder of the

office as his coadjutor. Annas had been appointed High Priest by Quirinus, governor of Syria, after the battle of Actium, but after seven years tenure of office was deposed by the Procurator Valerius Gratus (A.D. 14) and Ismael appointed in his place, but he in turn was soon deposed in favour of Eleazar a son of Annas. He only held office for a year, and was replaced by Simon son of Camithus, who again held the office only for a year and was succeeded by Joseph Caiaphas the son-in-law of Annas. Before his death Annas had seen five of his sons, in the office of High Priest.

It is easy to see how Annas might be regarded all this while as being the rightful High Priest, and how his sons and son-in-law, while exercising the civil¹ authority of the office, might willingly accord to him the personal deference and ecclesiastical precedence which the religious feeling of the Jews dictated

“ Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee.”

Galilee, in the Old Testament of inferior interest to the other two divisions of the country, in the Gospel history becomes of as great importance and deep interest as Judea, for among its hills He lived for thirty years, and its lake, its cities, its hills and plains

¹ Hyrcanus had left the civil government to his brother Aristobulus.—Josephus, “Antiquities,” XIV., 1, 2.

were the scene of the greater part of His public ministry. The intermediate Samaria, then the scene of the turbulent story of the rival kingdom of Israel, now hardly appears in the history.

The Sea of Galilee is a mountain lake about thirteen miles long, by about six miles across in its broadest parts. The country in the midst of which it is situated is for the most part an undulating table-land, which slopes abruptly down to the shores of the lake, where its waters lie about a thousand feet below the general level of the country, and seven or eight hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. This deep depression in which the lake lies is probably of volcanic origin; and the climate, like that of the whole deep Jordan valley is tropical in its heat, in strong contrast with the clear bracing atmosphere of the hills and upland valleys of the country round.

The hills on the eastern shore have the monotonous horizontal outline which belongs to the whole range of hills forming the eastern boundary of the Jordan valley; but those on the western shore are more varied in outline, especially at the northern end, and present a varied face of sloping hillside, and jutting crags; numerous springs break out and run a longer or shorter course into the lake scattering verdure and fertility along their course. The hills for the most part slope abruptly down to the shore, but they leave all round a narrow margin of greater or less breadth;

and the whole circumference of the water is fringed by a beach of white sand, often bordered with shrubs of thorn and oleander.

There are three larger spaces left between the water and the hills. Where the Jordan enters at the north, in a foaming rapid torrent, a little plain of fertile land is left between the lake and the high wall of the eastern range. At the southern extremity the river flows out into a wide valley which continues all the way to the Dead Sea. About the middle of its western side the hills suddenly recede and leave a level plain of five miles wide and six or seven miles long, watered by four springs which pour forth their almost full-grown rivers through the plain, and give to the rich soil a wonderful fertility ; this is the plain of Genesareth.

In the time of our Lord this mountain lake abounded in fish, and was the highway of a considerable traffic.

The hills in the north of Galilee, with the exception of a few rocky summits about Nazareth, were all wooded and sank down in graceful slopes and broad winding valleys of richest green. The plain of Esdraelon which stretched from west to east across the breadth of the country, and from north to south from the foot of the Galilean hills to the rise of those of Samaria, was exceedingly fertile. The plains and valleys grew corn ; the terraced hill-

sides olive and vine ; the higher slopes were dotted over with sheep. The whole region of Galilee was thickly studded with towns and villages, and was perhaps the most busy and thriving portion of the whole land. The eastern side of the Jordan valley, and how great a breadth of the grass of the wilderness beyond its boundary wall of hills we do not know, was also part of the territory of Antipas.

Herod the Tetrarch, until his father's death called him to the throne, had passed most of his life in Italy in friendship with the Emperor and familiar intercourse with the great nobles of Rome. Josephus says that he was of a quiet, indolent, unambitious spirit ; he seems to have had something of his father's ostentation and religious laxity. He had brought from Italy a taste for magnificence and for the manners of Rome.

He fortified Sephoris, the most considerable of the towns of Galilee, on the hills near the Mediterranean, and made it the metropolis of the Tetrarchy.

At a spot a little south of the fertile and populous plain of Genesareth, and divided from it by a spur of the mountains, the steep hills leave a narrow strip of land between their slope and the water, and at its southern extremity some remarkable hot springs break forth from the foot of the hills. Attracted by these hot springs Antipas built, on the strip of lake shore, a new city, which, in compliment to

the Emperor, he named Tiberias. He built a palace for himself,—of whose gilded roofs and royal furniture and stores of silver Josephus speaks [Life, § 13],—a stadium, and adorned the city with fine buildings, and attracted to it Greek and Roman as well as Jewish inhabitants. Beyond Jordan he also built the city and palace of Macherus, as a protection to his trans-Jordan territories on the side of Arabia. The city was situated (we learn from Josephus, for its very site is now unknown) on a spur of the range of hills which bound the eastern side of the valley, about four miles north of the Dead Sea, on the confines of his own jurisdiction, and of the territories of Aretas, the Arabian king, whose capital was at Petra, and whose daughter Herod had married and repudiated.

The steep declivity of the Jordan valley defended the site of the city on the west; two deep lateral ravines defended it on the north and south, a great artificial fosse on the east side completed the isolation of the city. Its great natural strength was increased by strong walls and towers. The elevated peak of the hill within the city was converted into a citadel with additional strong fortifications, and within the citadel the Tetrarch had built himself another magnificent palace. Pliny speaks of the place as second in strength only to Jerusalem. In these strong places Herod maintained a force of foreign merce-

narics. He was a favourite of the Emperor and a wealthy and prosperous prince.

Philip's Tetrarchy of Ituræa and the region of Trachonitis was the least important of the shares into which Herod had divided his inheritance among his sons. Having the upper course of the Jordan and the north-east shore of the lake of Galilee, for its western boundary it extended under the southern base of Hermon and to the south of Damascus. Trachonitis was the remarkable volcanic district anciently called Argob, and in modern times the Lejah.

From the description of Josephus, from whom most of our knowledge of the Herods is derived, Philip would seem to have been the best of the Herodian princes. "He had shown himself," he says,¹ "a person of moderation and quietness in his government; he constantly lived in that country which was subject to him; he used to make his progress with a few chosen friends; his tribunal also, on which he sat in judgment, followed him in his progress; and when any one met him who wanted his assistance, he made no delay, but had his tribunal set down immediately wheresoever he happened to be, and sat down upon it and heard the complaint; he then ordered the guilty that were convicted to

¹ "Antiquities," XVIII., iv. 6.

be punished, and absolved those that had been accused unjustly."

The Tetrarch of Ituræa had probably more excuse for city building in his remote province than some of his contemporaries. He built a new city for his capital at the foot of Hermon, near the sources of the Jordan which he called Cæsarea in honour of his Imperial patron, while to distinguish it from the numerous other Cæsareas people added his own name to that of his patron, so that it is known to us as Cæsarea Philippi. On the hill, over the cavern from which the visible fountain of the Jordan issues, he built a temple of white marble in honour of the Cæsar. Also, on the triangular plain which the Jordan leaves on the eastern bank where it flows into the sea of Galilee, between the river, the mountain, and the lake, he found in the town of Bethsaida the site for another royal city and palace on the pleasant shores of the lake, which he named Julias in compliment to his patron's daughter.

The Tetrarchy of Lysanias was situated on the eastern slope of Antilibanus, in a district fertilised by the river Barada (the Abana of the Old Testament), on its course towards the plain of Damascus. It was not a part of the dominions of Herod, and it does not enter into the gospel history and need not detain us longer.

That holy land then, over which our Lord travelled to and fro, was divided into three jurisdictions. There were some differences also in the character of the populations of the several parts of the land. In Judea, Gaza was a Greek city, and Cæsarea a Roman, but the rest of the people were of more unmixed Jewish race than elsewhere.

In Galilee, Tiberias as we have seen had more of the character of a Greek than of a Jewish city; and the Galileans generally had a greater admixture of foreign blood than the people of Judea.

The centre of the country stretching from the sea eastward to the Jordan, and from the southern border of the plain of Esdraclon to the northern border of Benjamin, was inhabited by the Samaritans. These were descended from the Assyrian colonists with whom Esarhaddon had peopled the desolated country of Israel. They had adopted the religion of the land, but when Ezra refused to allow them to unite with the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple, they built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, and the apostate priest Manasseh originated a rival priesthood there. The antagonism had continued throughout the subsequent period; the Samaritans receiving only the Pentateuch, and keeping up their schismatical priesthood and worship. Herod the great had rebuilt the city of Samaria, erected a heathen temple there, and peopled it with a

colony of veterans, and called it Sebaste (Augustus) in honour of the Emperor. The Jews refused to hold any intercourse with them, and the Samaritans retorted by opposing the passage through their country of the Galilean pilgrims bound to the feasts at Jerusalem, and driving them to go round by the eastern side of the Jordan.

In the Tetrarchy of Philip there was a preponderating Gentile population, and cities which were largely Greek in civilisation and religion; Gadara and Hippos are described by Josephus as Grecian cities; Cæsarea Philippi the capital of the Tetrarchy, and Bethsaida Julias had been built by Philip in the classical taste of the Herod family.

The population of the whole land was divided into three broad political parties. First, the Herodians, who are mentioned in Matt. xxii. 15, and Mark xii. 13. They were those whom hereditary connexions and personal interest bound to the cause of the family which for so many years had been the ruling family of the whole country, together with others who, with little personal attachment to the Herods, yet looked upon the continuance of the power of that family as the only practicable barrier against the direct dominion of Rome. In Judea, especially, a large part of the noble and wealthy classes were anxious to keep things as they were, and were sensi-

tively afraid of anything which should provoke Rome or give it an excuse to deprive them of the large measure of self-government and religious toleration they still possessed.

But a very large proportion of the people in all the sections of the land were profoundly dissatisfied with the political condition of the sacred nation, and nourished desires and expectations which made the situation critical and dangerous.

The general feeling of the people, that in their submission to any earthly sovereign was not only a national degradation, but also a sin against their allegiance to God, found its highest expression in the party of the Zealots. Josephus says, "These men agree in all things with the Pharisaic notions ; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty ; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death . . . nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord." ¹ The Jewish historian attributes the rise of the party to Judas of Galilee, who, when Cyrenius came to Syria on the deposition of Archelaus and began to take account of the substance of the people, headed a revolt against the Roman authority. The revolt was put down with great severity.

¹ "Antiquities," XVIII., I, I and 6.

But the fanatical spirit survived and showed itself in many future outbreaks. It culminated in the great rebellion of the time of Hadrian and Vespasian, which resulted in the destruction of the city and the dispersion of the people.

In matters of religious belief and practice also there were two great schools of thought among the Jews, the Pharisees, and Sadducees, to which the Essenes may be added as a third.

The Pharisees were not a sect, but a party or school among the Jews. The name means "separated," and it seems probable that it was in the days when the Greek masters of Palestine, and a party among the Jews themselves, were introducing Greek ideas and usages, and obliterating the distinctions between the Jews and the Gentiles, and so "mingling" the sacred race with the races among whom they dwelt, that the more zealous Jews maintained the more rigidly every point of difference, and a more exclusive attitude, and obtained the name of the Separatists.

But besides a strict adherence to the law, which would have been commendable, the Pharisees of our Lord's time believed that, in addition to the written law which contained general principles, Moses had given an oral law, which completed and explained the written law; and that this oral law was as binding as the written law. To this oral law had been added,

from time to time, the decisions of prophets and Rabbis, which were all equally binding. A principle had been adopted by the late teachers of "fencing the law," *i.e.*, adding prohibitions, *ex majori cautela*, to keep men far away from the approach to any violation of the law, *e.g.*, the law said, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk," the Rabbis added a prohibition to use any milk in the cooking of any flesh. Thus they multiplied prohibitions and ceremonies, which interfered with personal conduct and social intercourse, until they became "a burden too heavy to be borne." In the Mishna, written a short time after this period, these "traditions" were at length committed to writing, and the book remains to us as an illustration of the popular teaching of the Pharisaic school to which our Lord so often alludes.

But in these later times, the Pharisees were fast tending to become, not merely a school, but a sect or caste, for they formed societies among themselves, and avoided association with those who did not observe the same rules of life as themselves.

Another characteristic of the Pharisees is that they exalted the office of Rabbi, which depended upon learning and personal character, to the depreciation of that of Priest, which, being hereditary, was independent of personal merit.

Josephus says "they live meanly, despising deli-

cacies in diet, and follow the conduct of reason, and what that prescribes to them as good they do. . . . They also pay a respect to such as are in years. . . . whatsoever the people do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform according to their directions. . . . The cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also." ("Antiquities," bk. xviii., ch. 1, § 3.) There was much hypocrisy among them, as there will always be among any large party of men who make asceticism obligatory instead of voluntary; they were all, in a sense, formalists, but much of the religious earnestness of the nation was to be found among the Pharisees; they professed a strictness of moral conduct as well as a scrupulousness in the observance of religious duties; they contrasted favourably with the cold, legal orthodoxy of the Sadducees, and with the lax religious belief and practice of the Herodians, and the carelessness of the multitude, and were held in high respect, and consequently exercised a considerable influence among the people.

The origin of the Sadducees is more obscure.¹ The most probable conjecture is that the priests of the time of Zadok (who obtained the High-Priesthood on the accession of Solomon) formed a kind of sacer-

¹ Article upon them in Smith's "Bible Dictionary."

dotal aristocracy, to which afterwards were attached all who for any reason reckoned themselves as belonging to the aristocracy,—such, for example, as the families of the high-priest, judges, and individuals of the official or governing class. The leading distinction between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was that the former denied that the oral law, as it existed among them, had come from Moses, or had any religious authority; though it is possible that they observed many of the customary observances which had been thus introduced as matters of custom.

Thus rejecting the oral law, and relying entirely on the written law, they also rejected the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, on the ground that it is not taught in the Law of Moses. The belief that they rejected all the Old Testament Scriptures except the Pentateuch is now generally admitted to be an error; though it may be, that not only they, but the Jews generally, regarded Moses as standing on a higher level of authority than any of the later Prophets; so that, while admitting that there appear to be allusions to a future life in the Prophetical and Poetical Writings, they might still decline to accept it as a doctrine divinely revealed, on the ground that it was not definitely taught by Moses.

In the narrative of the New Testament the Sadducees seem to have consisted of a small number of

persons of the highest class of Jewish society, whose position gave them an influence in the conduct of affairs not less than that which numbers and popularity gave to the Pharisaic party.

These two schools of thought—the Pharisees and Sadducees—were widely scattered throughout Jewish society. There was still another religious school, not numerous, but which excited much interest, and probably exercised an influence far out of proportion to its numbers. These were the Essenes. In doctrine they did not differ from strict Pharisees, the difference lay chiefly in their mode of life; they separated themselves from the world, lived a rigid ascetic life, and gave themselves to religious contemplation. They were to the Jewish Church of those times what the anchorites and monks were afterwards to the Christian Church.

About two centuries before the period of which we write, there arose in the solitary country on the west side of the Dead Sea a society of pious men, who sought refuge in these solitudes from reigning corruption, from the strifes of parties, and the storms and conflicts of the world. They attracted the interest of the elder Pliny, who describes them as “a race entirely by themselves, and, beyond every other in the world deserving of wonder; men living in communion with nature; without wives, without money. Every day their number is replen-

ished by a new troop of settlers, since they are much visited by those whom the reverses of fortune have driven, tired of the world, to their mode of living." Josephus tells us they entirely addressed themselves to agriculture, and had all things in common ("Antiquities," xviii. 1, 5). When a boy of sixteen he himself joined their ranks. "When I was informed that one whose name was Banus lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, by night and by day, in order to preserve his chastity, I imitated him in those things, and continued with him three years."

From their original seat colonies had been formed in other parts of Palestine, some even in villages and towns; and individuals attached to their body even lived in the ordinary occupations of life. Manahem (said to have been the colleague of Hillel, the great Rabbi), the friend of Herod, was an Essene, and the school was regarded with favour by Herod on that account.

Josephus states that in his time their numbers were only about 4,000; but it is probable that they excited general interest, and exercised that influence which examples of purity, self-denial, unworldliness and spirituality do usually exercise, silently, it may be, but extensively upon the mind of their age.

This, then, was the scene of the history of the years of our Lord's public life : this Palestine, with its teeming population of mingled nationalities, with its administrative divisions, its political parties, its sects and schools, the domination of Rome giving a certain unity to its political constitution, and the Jewish religion and municipal law giving a certain unity of national life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FORERUNNER.



WHEN a monarch makes a royal progress, a forerunner or harbinger or courier goes before him to give notice, that everything may be duly prepared for his coming ; so John the Baptist goes before the Lord Jesus, "to prepare the way of the Lord." Usually the harbinger goes on his way, no one looks at him a second time, or remembers him after he is gone ; but John is a remarkable person ; the functions he fulfils are important ; for a little while he and his ministry occupy the foreground of the history, and claim our attentive consideration.

John is so important a person in the history of the Christ that he himself was the subject of more than one ancient prophecy ; for he is the "Voice" of Isaiah proclaiming "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" ;¹ he is the "Messenger" who, Malachi foretold, "should prepare the way before Him" ;² and the "Elijah"³ of the same prophet, who was to be sent before the Advent of the Lord.

¹ Isaiah xl. 3.

² Malachi iii. 1.

³ Malachi iv. 5.

His birth was attended by remarkable circumstances. It was announced to Zachariah by the angel Gabriel in the Holy Place of the Temple ; he was born like Isaac of a mother past the age of child-bearing ; his name was divinely given to him before his birth ; the voice of revived prophecy declared him in his earliest days to be the prophet and forerunner promised of old time : "Thou child shall be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."¹

A single sentence contains his history from the day on which these words were spoken of him during the thirty years which passed away until the Gospel brings him upon the stage again : "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel." If we also recall to mind that the angel had directed that the child should be brought up as a Nazarite from his birth, and had declared that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb, we shall have before us all the knowledge we possess of John's early years.

The desert mentioned was probably that which lay between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. But we have seen that this was the very locality in which the Essenes had their head quarters, and the story of

¹ Luke i. 76.

Josephus indicates that besides the large communities on the shore of the Dead Sea there were individual recluses scattered over the neighbouring desert. John would appear, to people who knew anything of him, to be one of these. And there, in the solitude and mortification, in the reading and prayer and contemplation of the ascetic life, John was trained for his office and work.

The contrast between this ascetic life of John in the desert and the life of domestic charities and homely duties which Jesus led in the home at Nazareth is very sharp and striking, and naturally attracted the attention of their contemporaries:—John with his attenuated figure and features, his prophet's mantle of rough hair cloth girded with a leather thong, his dark dishevelled Nazaritic hair flowing over his shoulders, his dark deep-set eyes, now with the mystic's dreamy inward look of habitual meditation, now flashing with the fire of prophetic inspiration; Jesus with his calm and gracious presence, his golden hair and outward-looking observant eyes, his white tunic, woven without seam, which loving hands had made, girded after the fashion of the day with a scarf of many colours, and the striped blue robe; the contrast in their mode of life, John holding aloof from men, "neither eating nor drinking"; Jesus freely mixing with his fellows, accepting invitations to marriages and to feasts.

In allusion to the objections which people made then, as they do now, some objecting to John's asceticism and some to the absence of it in Jesus, the Lord replied "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Probably the stern, self-denying, unworldly ascetic is the most efficient preacher of repentance, and renewed religious earnestness, to a religious world like that to which the Baptist had to preach, formal and proud, wealthy, worldly, and self-indulgent. While it was of the essence of Christ's example to show the pattern of a holy life, not in an exceptional mode of life, but in a life led under the ordinary conditions; thus hallowing the common human life and showing all men how they may hallow their own lives after the pattern of His.

At length, at the age of thirty years,¹ "the word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness," that is the prophetic inspiration came upon him, and he came forth into the fertile populous Jordan valley, and began to preach REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

His remarkable appearance, like "one of the old prophets risen again," naturally attracted the attention of the people; his declaration "the kingdom of

¹ It was the age at which the law (or custom) allowed the sons of Aaron to enter upon their priestly functions.

Heaven is at hand" fell on their expectant state of mind like a spark on tinder.

By "the kingdom of heaven" John's contemporaries understood that kingdom which God had promised to the Son of David (Ps. i. 8); that fifth great monarchy of which Daniel had prophesied (Dan. ii. 44, 45; ix. 24); that reign of peace and righteousness whose characteristics Isaiah had described in beautiful language, as familiar to the hearts of God's people in that day as in this. They had gathered together all the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah and his kingdom, and out of them they had evolved a magnificent picture of a Messiah who should be a legislator like Moses, a conqueror like Joshua and David, a magnificent monarch like Solomon; who should break the yoke of Rome from off the neck of the world, and make Jerusalem instead of Rome the centre of the world, and the Jewish instead of the Roman the dominant race; who should establish a reign of peace, justice, prosperity and happiness, such as the world had never seen; a reign which should extend to the uttermost part of the earth and last to the end of time. We must grasp this idea in all its grandeur, and all its likelihood, if we would understand the exalted condition of mind of those who were "looking for redemption in Israel," if we would understand the full significance of John's prophecy,

“the kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” and of Christ’s fulfilment of it.

As the preparation for the coming of this kingdom John preached repentance; a national revival of spiritual holiness. So in former times in preparation for the giving of the Law, Moses had bidden the people to sanctify themselves. So at this time when the Jews admitted Gentiles into the covenant of Abraham they first baptized them with water to purify and fit them for admission among the people of God. And so John baptized the Jews unto repentance to purify and fit them for admission into the higher dispensation of the Kingdom of God.

Profounder minds might have seen that the character of the Forerunner and the mode of his announcement of the kingdom foreshadowed the nature of the Christ and of his kingdom. The royal herald was not a warrior, but an ascetic, and the note of preparation was not “He that hath no sword let him sell his coat and buy one,” but “Repent.”

The Baptist’s preaching produced a widespread and profound impression over the whole of Palestine: “All men counted John that he was a prophet.” “Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins.”¹

¹ Matt. iii. 5.

“ Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism.”¹ The despised publicans;² the hated soldiers³ of Herod Antipas from the neighbouring Macherus. Herod⁴ himself “knew him to be a good man and an holy, and observed him, and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly” ; and “the Jews,” *i.e.*, the authorities of the nation, “sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? Art thou Elias? Art thou the Christ?”⁵

¹ Matt. iii. 7.

² Luke iii. 12.

³ Luke iii. 14.

⁴ Mark vi. 20.

⁵ John i. 19, 21.

PART III.—THE MINISTRY.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE BAPTISM.

THE scene of John's baptism was at Bethabara (or Bethany), beyond Jordan, where the Jordan valley as it approaches its debouchure into the Dead Sea, widens into a broad fertile tract of country, with the Judean hills on the west, and the long wall of the mountains of Moab on the East. The remarkable depression of the country, here 1,000 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, gives it a tropical climate; and the groups of palms and luxuriant vegetation, fed by numerous springs, gave the landscape an air of beauty in striking contrast with the bare and brown hills which enclose it. The important city of Jericho was on the other side of the river at the foot of the western hills; the strong fortress of Macherus with its dependent town was at about the same distance on an isolated spur of the Moabite hills. The Jordan here is a broad and rapid stream; but the scene of the Baptism was probably some affluent rising from

the eastern range, whose sparkling waters afforded the typical element in convenient abundance, while the groups of trees nourished by the water-course afforded shade to the disciples, as they sat and listened to the prophet. "Then cometh Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him" (Matt. iii. 13).

It may be doubted whether the significance of the baptism of Jesus is commonly understood, and whether the incident holds so important a place as it ought to do in the popular view of the sacred life. It was, in fact, the outward designation of Jesus as the promised Messiah, and his solemn consecration to the office.

When Jesus "came from Nazareth of Galilee to Jordan unto John," he was an unknown man; he had said nothing and done nothing to attract men's attention to him; he was one among the thousands who came from all parts to hear John preach and to be baptized of him.

John had, indeed, some previous knowledge of him; they were cousins; he could hardly be ignorant of the prophetic utterances at the time of their infancy which had foretold their after destinies, and relation as the Forerunner and the Christ; he recognised that there was an incongruity in his baptizing Jesus for the kingdom of Heaven, that he ought rather to be baptized for the kingdom by its destined king.

The reply, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Mat. iii. 14-15), seems to mean that since he had not yet been called and consecrated to his office he was yet one among the rest of the people; that in this character he was doing right in showing faith in John's announcement of the kingdom and seeking his baptism as one who desired to enter into it; and that, though hereafter their relation might be altered, John would do right now in performing the functions of his office upon him.

But John could not declare him to be the Christ on the testimony of others, he could not add his independent testimony until he was authorised by the sign which had been given him. For as it had been revealed to Simeon that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ; and, as on a particular day he came by the spirit into the Temple and it was made known to him that the child then being presented was the Christ, so it had been revealed to John that he should not only vaguely prepare men's minds for the Messiah's coming, but that he should know the Messiah by the testimony of a sign from heaven, and should point him out to the people:—

"He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John i. 33).

"Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was

opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him : and lo, the heavens were opened, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17, "This is," &c. ; Mark i. 11 ; Luke iii. 22).

Then the long line of Messianic prophecy, which began in Paradise with the promise of "the seed of the woman," and which had grown continually clearer and more definite, designating successively the seed of Abraham, of Isaac (not of Ishmael), of Jacob (not of Esau), the tribe of Judah, the house of David, reached its climax when the Baptist stretched forth his hand towards Jesus and said :—

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "This is he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me" (John i. 29, 30).

Now that we are perhaps better prepared to understand its significance we may glance again at the brief but important narrative and make a further note or two upon it. It was as he was praying that the heaven was opened and the dove descended and the voice was heard ; as if the supernatural conclusion was connected with, was in answer to, his prayer. The heaven was opened, "rent asunder" is the force of St. Mark's expression ; and as Stephen saw heaven opened and the glory of God and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God, so now Jesus saw "the heavens opened unto him" and the glory of the Divine Majesty, and the spirit descend

out of the midst of the divine glory, in a bodily shape like a dove,—of light or fire perhaps, and lighting upon him, as the tongues of fire afterwards on the disciples on the day of Pentecost; and there came a voice out of the opened heavens, the voice of the Father, saying “Thou art my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

St. Mark and St. Luke say that the voice was addressed to Jesus. If John heard it, as St. Matthew’s “This is my Beloved Son” seems to suggest, for a further confirmation of the appointed sign of the descending dove, still the declaration was addressed to Jesus, and was for his sake; not only, or chiefly, if at all, for the sake of them that stood by. It was God’s declaration to the man Jesus of his being the Son of God, beloved of God, and approved by God, made at this momentous crisis of his life and work. It was the confirmation to the human mind and spirit of the Son of Man of God’s approval of his previous life up to this great crisis, and an assurance of his love and support in the great work to which He now called Him.

The descent of the Holy Spirit at his baptism was not only the designation of Jesus as the Messiah of the ancient prophecies, it was also his consecration to the office, and qualification for the work.

The Hebrew word “Messiah,” translated into Greek is “Christ,” and translated into English is “Anointed.”

The Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed mean precisely the same thing. We shall better understand the significance of the title if we consider some of its types.

In the ancient dispensation God directed that three classes of men should be solemnly designated and consecrated for their office by the ceremony of anointing, *i.e.* the pouring of consecrated oil upon the head. The three classes of men who were to be anointed were kings, priests, and prophets. Thus Samuel anointed Saul, and afterwards David to be kings of God's people (1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 13); and Zadok anointed Solomon (1 Kings 1. 34). Moses anointed Aaron to be priest (Exod. xxix. 7). God bade Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, and Jehu to be king of Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his own place (1 Kings xix. 15).

The meaning of the ceremony was this. These three classes of men are appointed by God, and He delegates to them something of His own prerogative. The king is the vicegerent over a particular nation of Him who is the King of all nations, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The priest fulfils a two-fold function: at one time he stands at the head of the people as their representative and spokesman, offering their prayers and solemn things to God; at another time he stands before the people as God's representative, the channel through which he gives them

grace and blessings. The prophet speaks God's words to the people. The anointing was a sacramental rite ; oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit ; and the pouring it upon the heads of these men was not only an authoritative appointment of them to their offices, but it was also a sacramental communication to them of the graces of the spirit necessary to qualify them to fulfil the functions delegated to them. For example, David was thus designated out of all the sons of Jesse as the future king of Israel, and when Samuel poured the oil upon him "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel xvi. 13).

But these ancient kings were only types of Him to whom, as Son of Man, all power is given in heaven and in earth. He is the real king, of whom all others are vicegerents. The ancient priesthoods, whether of Melchizedek or Aaron, were types of Him who is the only real priest ; who being God as well as man. represents the godhead to us, and is the channel of all pardon, grace, and blessing to us ; and who, having taken our humanity, being the second Adam, represents our race before the mercy-seat, and offers our prayers and praises, with the incense of his own intercession. God spake of old time by his prophets, who brought occasional and partial messages to his people, but in these last days he has spoken unto us by his Son, who is the very

word and wisdom of God. Thus Jesus is *the* king, *the* priest, *the* prophet, emphatically THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD, THE CHRIST, THE MESSIAH.

He was not only designated to this office at his baptism by prophetic voice and heavenly sign, but the Holy Spirit was given to him to fit him for the fulfilment of the great office and work of the Messiahship. We have already been told that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him,"¹ and again, that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."² Now we are told that he received fresh grace of the Holy Spirit to fit him for new duties: the Baptist says in allusion to this occasion, "God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him";³ and St. John the Evangelist tells us that it is of this "his fulness that all we have received, and grace upon grace."⁴

Those long years of silence and obscurity which were thus brought to a close, were not silent and obscure through the voluntary choice, so to speak, of Jesus; they were a part of his humility and obedience to the will of God. Very possibly he had already said many times in his heart in allusion to this baptism of the Spirit, as he did afterwards to the

¹ Luke ii. 40. ² Luke ii. 52. ³ John iii. 34. ⁴ John i. 16.

baptism of blood, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." But it was not for him to assume to himself the Messiahship, and to go forth to its awful work, until God should call him and qualify him: "No man taketh this honour to himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." So Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest, but he that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

At every great crisis of the history the question arises anew of the nature of the relations of the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus. We should have thought that the Son of God need not thus wait to be called by God the Father to take upon him the office and work which he came into the world on purpose to fulfil; and that God the Son did not need the grace of the Holy Spirit to qualify him for it; but we gather that it was the duty of the Son of Man to wait for God's call, and that the Son of Man did need the grace of the Spirit. We should, perhaps, have thought that the Son of God did not need to pray to the Father, and did not need the Voice to assure him of the Father's love and approval; but we see in many places that the Son of Man habitually prayed, spent nights of prayer, and we gather that the Son of Man was strengthened and reassured by the gracious words of God.

John's ministry had done its work of attracting universal attention, and the multitudes who were baptized by him were an evidence of a real and wide-spread spirit of moral preparation ; it was then that Jesus came to John ; and John's ministry was crowned when he designated and sacramentally consecrated the Messiah. His ministry was virtually accomplished, and he begins to recede into the background of the history: "John decreases while Jesus increases."¹ Shortly after John was imprisoned and after some months he was put to death. Let us not fail to learn a lesson from his humility who described himself as no one, a mere voice uttering a message ; who contentedly saw his own popularity wane before that of Jesus ; and another lesson from his boldness in rebuking vice not only among publicans and harlots, but among chief priests and kings ; let us remember to his honour the testimony of his Lord, "a prophet, yea, I say unto you and much more than a prophet, for verily I say unto you among those that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist"; and we are constrained to add the glorious conclusion of the saying, "notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

¹ John iii. 30.

CHAPTER XX

THE GREAT FAST.

THE long years of growth and preparation are over, and this one perfect and unspotted scion of the great human race, like a young plant which had grown in a sheltered situation, and bloomed under a smiling sky,—this brilliant youth (he was still only thirty years old), the flower of the human race,—has been led forth from his obscurity by the hand of God, and proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the promised man round whom the whole history of the world turns, the “Desire of all nations,” the destined Saviour and King of men. The Divine Spirit has been poured without measure upon that perfect humanity. He stands upon the threshold of his career. What will follow? What divine splendours will henceforth surround the Beloved Son? What will be the great achievements of the Champion of mankind? We expect now the Jewish nation first, and then all the nations, to rally round their natural Head and Prince.

It is very striking to find that what does really immediately follow is the record of his being brought

into the depth of human destitution and feebleness. "Immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days [and forty nights, St. Matthew iv. 2] . . . with the wild beasts" (St. Mark i. 12, 13), "and in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended he afterward hungered" (St. Luke iv. 2). The Fasting followed "immediately" upon the Baptism; and all three of the Evangelists specially call our attention to the fact that this first act of the newly-consecrated Messiah was undertaken under a strong impulse of that Holy Spirit which had just been without measure given to Him: "He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness," say St. Matthew and St. Luke, while St. Mark seems to indicate the urgency of the impulse,—“the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness”; overcoming, perhaps, some natural shrinking of the human will from the great initial trial and combat with the powers of evil, as afterwards from the great final conflict at Gethsemane.

Again the Fasting clearly is related to the subsequent Temptation; St. Matthew says, "He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness [in order] to be tempted of the devil." What were the relations between the Fasting and the Temptation of our Lord? The question opens up the whole subject of the use of Fasting as a spiritual exercise. We find it taken for granted all through both the Old and the

New Testaments as a proper accompaniment of times of special prayer, and a proper preparation for great spiritual crises. Ezra¹ fasted before he started from Babylon to go up to Jerusalem to undertake the reconstruction of the theocracy of Israel; Christ fasted before he called His twelve Apostles;² Saul fasted during the crisis of his conversion;³ the Prophets and Teachers of Antioch⁴ fasted before they consecrated Barnabas and Saul to the apostolate; Barnabas and Saul,⁵ fasted when they ordained elders in every city.

Our Lord seems to throw light upon the special relation of the Fasting to the Temptation when he says to his Apostles, who had failed to heal the paralytic boy, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."⁶

The Fasts which at once occur to our mind as presenting the most resemblance to that of our Lord are the Fasts of Moses before he went up into Mount Sinai to hold communication with God and to receive the law, and the Fast of Elijah on his pilgrimage to the Vision and the still small voice of God in Horeb.

On the whole, we seem to gather that this great Fast of our Blessed Lord, immediately after his desig-

¹ Ezra viii. 23.

² Luke vi. 12.

³ Acts xi. 9.

⁴ Acts xiii. 3.

⁵ Acts xiv. 23.

⁶ Matt. xvii. 21.

nation to the office of the Messiah, and immediately before his first great encounter with the Enemy of Mankind, was the solemn discipline of his human spirit for the work upon which he had entered.

It gives a clue to the whole character of the work of Redemption. The great Champion of fallen humanity was to fight by suffering, and to conquer by dying. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TEMPTATION.

THE history has already brought us face to face with great and glorious mysteries of the unseen world. We have heard the Father's voice from heaven, and seen the Spirit descending in bodily shape upon the Incarnate Lord. We have seen the angels of God mingling in the affairs of men, appearing to the priest in the Temple, and the maid in her cottage, and to Joseph and the Magi in dreams. We are now to be brought face to face with another,—the darkest and most dreadful of the mysteries of the unseen world,—the existence of evil spirits, and their agency in effecting the original fall of man, and in aggravating man's sin and misery in every age.

The Gospel postulates the history of the Fall, though now it first alludes directly to it. As soon as he has assumed the Messiahship, Jesus finds himself confronted with the Arch Enemy.

There are many Christian people who have very vague notions about the Satan of the Scriptures.

Some think him a kind of unreal personification of a principle of evil which pervades the world. Some who believe in Satan's real personality think of him as if he were present to every man, and tempting him always, *i.e.*, as ubiquitous and omniscient, making him a kind of evil deity. It is important for the understanding of the whole religious history and condition of man to have an accurate knowledge of this important subject.

Satan was originally one of the angels of heaven, probably an archangel, one of the chiefs of the heavenly hosts. Angels, like all creatures with a free will, are liable to set their will in opposition to God's will, *i.e.*, to sin; and the Scriptures tell us that some of the angels, of whom Satan was chief, did actually sin. We know how fallen men and women seem to have a jealous hatred of the good, and to take a dreadful pleasure in bringing others down to their own moral level. The fallen angels exhibit the same dreadful malice. There was, perhaps, some special relation between Satan and mankind. It has been conjectured that God executes his ordinary providential government of the universe through his angels, and that the special care of this world and its newly-created race had been committed to the archangel Satan, and that when he fell, instead of its beneficent ruler he became its tyrant, so far as his power was permitted, in accordance with God's

wonderful ways, who is accustomed to let evil kings still rule nations, and evil fathers still rule their families, and who out of all this evil will eventually deduce a higher good, and justify his long-suffering, and vindicate his wisdom and goodness in the face of men and angels.

Others have conjectured that the fall of the angels occurred before the creation of mankind, and that the creation of this new race had some relation to the angels' fall, and that this directed the special malice of Satan against our unhappy race, and made him the special enemy of mankind.

This spiritual foe of mankind, then, is a fallen archangel. By falling into sin he did not cease to be an angel, and become a being of another nature. He did not gain any new powers, or any increase of his original powers, rather we may be sure that his original powers suffered deterioration.

We need not suppose, then, that Satan knew more of the divine scheme by which man was to be recovered from the fall into which Satan had seduced him than the unfallen angels; and we seem to gather that this scheme of redemption was not made known beforehand to them, but that they watch it unfolded before their eyes with intensest interest,—“which things the angels desire to look into.” Perhaps Satan knew as much of it as the unfallen angels, and watched it with equal interest, and sought to defeat it.

The circumstances of the Baptism may have directed Satan's attention to Jesus. He, as well as the Baptist, had, perhaps, recognised the signs of the Messiahship; he too, perhaps, had heard the voice saying, "Thou art my Beloved Son." He recognises Him of whom it had been prophesied from the beginning, that He should "bruise the serpent's head." He recognises the great Champion of the human race, and he, the great Enemy, enters into spiritual conflict with Him. It is an awful moment in the world's history. The Champion of the human race has entered the lists, and its great and hitherto triumphant Tyrant comes forth to meet him.

The weapons of Satan's warfare are temptations; and his temptations are always adapted with great subtlety to the character and circumstances of those he assails. Coarse temptations, pleasure, wealth, ambition,—are adapted to coarse minds; but to finer natures he presents more refined allurements. He approached unfallen Eve in some bright disguise, and tempted her with the hope of raising mankind at once to that more glorious height which God had held out vaguely in the future as the reward of steadfastness. The Tree of Life God had given to sustain their actual life; this higher life, He had declared, was in some way connected with the other Tree of Knowledge. Satan led Eve to believe that the eating of this other tree would raise her at once to that higher

life without probation and delay. Eat of it and "ye shall be as gods."

No doubt he approached our Lord in some disguise. Perhaps it is to his apparent form on this occasion, that St. Paul alludes when he says, that Satan "is transformed into an angel of light."¹ And he adapted his temptation to our Lord's nature and circumstances. He is the "Beloved Son," He is the destined Deliverer. This fact is the key to his three-fold temptation: it is based upon the "If thou be the Son of God."

The Lord kneels in the desert, at the end of his forty days' fast, reduced to the extremity of human weakness; one appears to him like an angel of light; he only anticipates by a few hours—or moments—the coming of the angels who ministered to Him when the Temptation was done. In plausible words he utters the suggestion, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread":—If thou art the Son of God thou hast great destinies before Thee; suffer not thyself thus to perish miserably of hunger; thy fast has surely lasted long enough; now exert the power which, as Son of God, thou must needs possess, and so save thyself for the great future.

Where would have been the harm? In after years, twice over, He wrought a miracle to alleviate the

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

discomfort of the multitudes suffering from a few hours' fast; why should He not make a similar exertion of His power on this occasion? In a few hours—or minutes—the angels did bring supernatural succour; why should not the king of the angels anticipate their ministrations? He Himself gives us the reply:—

Jesus answered him, saying,—

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The meaning of the answer is a little obscure. Let us turn to the place in which “it is written,” viz., Deut. viii. 3, and study it there, and we shall arrive at its meaning. God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, “to humble them, and to prove them, and to make them know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live”; *i.e.*, God fed Israel with manna to make them know that He who gave life, and ordinarily sustains it by ordinary food, could, in the absence of ordinary food create new means of sustaining it, or without means could sustain it by the mere word of his power. The manna fell every day, just sufficient for every person, until they entered the Promised Land, and came within reach of the garnered corn of the Canaanites. Thus God brought Israel to trust with entire dependence and confidence in Him for the supply of their necessities.

Jesus is truly man, living a true human life in all

respects, not bringing in his Godhead at every turn, or even in any extremity, to help his human feebleness, or soften the conditions of his human life. He exercised His divine power with the utmost readiness and freedom on behalf of others, never on His own behalf. He had undertaken this fast under a divine impulse, "the Spirit had led him up ["driven him"] into the wilderness," and he left Himself in the hands of God. To have complied with Satan's suggestion would have shown that His trust in God's providence had come to an end. It was not so, He still had perfect confidence in God. And thereby He taught *us* a perfect confidence in God; God often lets man reach the extremity of endurance before He interferes; so often that it has become a proverb, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

"Then the devil taketh him up into the Holy City, and setteth him on the pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matt. iv. ; Luke iv.).

Whether Satan actually transported our Lord in the body, or only in a trance or vision; whether, afterwards, in the third temptation, he caused him actually to see all the provinces of Palestine from some Pisgah-point, or only in a vision caused the kingdoms of the world and their glory to pass before His mind's eye, we do not know; and it is of little

importance to the matter in hand. We must bear in mind that there were no spectators of the temptation, that its circumstances can only be known from our Lord's own narration of them, and that he has told them in such a way as to produce upon our minds the truest impression of this great and mysterious transaction.

"The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose." Our Lord had quoted Scripture in justification of his leaving Himself, even in this extremity, in the hands of God; Satan appeals to this sublime and entire confidence in the providential care of God. He quotes the Scripture promise contained in the 91st Psalm, which applies to Him,—if He be the Son of God,—and suggests to Him to make proof of it: "Cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee; and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Jesus, no doubt, had long looked forward, during the years of obscurity and waiting, to the hour when He would enter upon the office and work of the Messiah; His human heart was likely now to be swelling with a solemn exultation in the consciousness of the dignity and the powers lately committed to Him; He might well be in haste to make proof of His powers; to realise them to Himself in their exercise; to convince this doubting spirit.

But the clear insight of the mind and spirit of Jesus saw the fallacy and the snare. Satan had misquoted his text, it runs, "He shall give his angels charge of Thee *to keep thee in all thy ways.*" God's promise to preserve us "in all our ways" does not justify us in running into danger in order to make proof of His promise; nay, the promise does not extend to dangers which we wilfully incur, but only to those which come to us in the fulfilment of God's will for us, in walking in those ways which God has marked out for us to go in.

Our Lord's reply to the temptation is again given in Scripture language, which touches the very heart of the matter: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,"—thou shalt not put His promise to the proof to see if He will be as good as His word. Christ's perfect and entire trust in God was not tinged with the sin of spiritual presumption.

"Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Satan is "the Father of lies," but his suggestions generally have some truth in them, and it is that element of truth in them which makes them so dangerous:—

"A lie which is half a truth is the greatest of lies." There was truth in his assertion to our first parents

that there was a higher state of being possible to them, and that God was delaying their admission into it; the lie was in teaching them that it was possible for them by their own act to abridge this delay, and that the means to do so was to eat of this mysterious fruit which God had forbidden. So it is possible that there was a truth in what Satan here asserts to Jesus. We have already alluded to the suggestion that the government of this world had been committed to Satan, and that he still exercises a certain power over it. The vocation of the Messiah was to establish a universal monarchy; Satan knew so much, as every Jew knew it; and Satan may have shared the common Jewish error that it was a great temporal monarchy which the Messiah was to establish and rule. The temptation he offered was to withdraw his opposition, to use the power given him to aid Jesus in the accomplishment of his design, to abridge the long delay before the ultimate triumph of the kingdom, if the Messiah would make in return some acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the Angel of the World. We must suppose that Satan knew not, any more than men did at that time, the awful mystery of the Deity which lay hidden in the humanity of Jesus, and that he did not know that Jesus had penetrated his angelic disguise.

Jesus answered, "Get thee behind me, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,

and Him only shalt thou serve," and so taught us not to be tempted to take evil roads to right ends, but to hold fast to God's way, though it seem to lead a long way round, through huge dangers and terrible sufferings; that not for the sake of gaining the highest and noblest ends for ourselves, not in the desire of securing the greatest blessings to others, ought we to swerve a hair's breadth from the right,—that we ought not to do evil that good may come.

"Then the devil departed from him ["for a season," Luke iv. 13], and angels came and ministered unto him."

The difficult question of the relation of the Temptation to the double nature of our Lord, is sure to suggest itself to the thoughtful student of the history of our Redemption. First, we lay it down as a certain truth that Jesus endured the Fast and the Temptation in the strength of His human nature, aided by such helps of grace as are given to other men in their time of need, but without availing Himself of the attributes of His divine nature. He endured the Fast as man, He encountered the Temptation as man. This is essential to the understanding of one great aspect of the transaction. Jesus was what unfallen Adam was. He was subjected to the same temptation in its essence as that with which the Enemy assailed Adam. And while the first Adam fell under the assault, the second Adam remained uninjured. It was necessary to the vindication of God's wisdom

and justice. Men will think that God placed Adam under circumstances in which it was morally impossible for him to retain his integrity ; the second Adam, under the same circumstances, did stand.

Then the horrible thought suggests itself, suppose Jesus had succumbed to the subtlety of the Tempter. The reply of the great theologians is, that Jesus was "impeccable." Grasp clearly the truth, that though the assumption of the human nature clothes the Son of God with human body, mind, and will, yet it is the Son of God who has assumed them ; and it is blasphemous, impossible, to conceive of God yielding to temptation, and falling into sin.

Yet the temptation was a real temptation ; for that human body, soul, and will, were capable of feeling the force of temptation ; His body, we know, felt hunger and thirst, His mind felt unkindness and unsuccess, His will felt the instinctive human desire to escape from that which was painful to human nature.

The difficulty remains a difficulty, after all that can be said. Just as it remains a difficulty how Jesus could grow in wisdom, seeing the Son of God is omniscient. Let it be enough for our consolation to be assured that "He was tempted in all points like as we are," and can feel the sympathy of personal knowledge and experience for us in temptation, and will efficiently succour them that are tempted. Let it be enough for our assurance to know that His

human will did not yield to temptation ; that Adam might equally have retained his integrity ; and that we sons of Adam who are born again into the second Adam by the Spirit, are now placed, like him, upon our probation ; that we can and must resist temptation ; that if we yield we fall, like the first Adam, into ruin ; if we remain firm, we triumph in the second Adam, and tread Satan under our feet.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIRST DAYS OF THE MINISTRY.

NE of the features of the history, which will strike every thoughtful mind, is its surprises. What happens is so different from what we should have expected ; but when we come to consider it, what really happens,—we can often see, and so we learn to take always for granted,—has a profounder appropriateness, a higher spiritual grandeur, than our anticipation. We should not have expected that this gracious youth, just proclaimed Messiah, and declared the Beloved Son, and filled with the Spirit, would have been immediately led into the wilderness to undergo the forty days' fast. As little should we have expected that after the mysterious initiation of the forty days' fast, and the first great spiritual achievement of the victory over the great Enemy of Mankind, His life would pass straight from this tremendous strain to scenes of calm idyllic beauty.

After the forty days were over, "Jesus returned to Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing." And now it is that the prophecy of

John rises to its highest strain. The object of prophecy was to point forward to the Christ, and to declare the nature of His person and His work.

John is enabled to identify the Messiah, and to point Him out to all who were expecting His advent ; he also utters some remarkable declarations as to His person and His work :—

“ He that cometh from above is above all ; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth, he that cometh from heaven is above all. . . . He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand ” (John iii. 31–35).

“ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him ” (John i. 18).

“ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ” (John i. 29, 36).

“ The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost ” (John i. 33).

“ Of his fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace ” (John i. 16).

In these words we recognise that the last and greatest of the Prophets speaks in no ambiguous words :—

I.—Of the eternal Sonship and mission unto the world.

II.—Of the Great Sacrifice.

III.—Of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The office of John was to prepare the way for the Christ, and we find that his ministry had been so effectual that he sends his disciples to Jesus and

they become His disciples even before He has called them :—

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming to him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29). And “Again, the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.”

“One of the two,” he tells us, “was Andrew,” and the other, doubtless, was John, who, as usual in his Gospel, refrains from naming himself. Of the nature of the momentous interview we are told nothing, but of the result of it :—

“Andrew first findeth his brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah; and he brought Simon to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas (which is, by interpretation, [Peter], a stone).” The day following, Jesus “was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me. . . . Philip findeth Nathanael [otherwise called Bartholomew] and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. . . . Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.”

Thus the first step of the Messiah is to begin to

gather a body of disciples ; and these five,—Andrew and John, and Simon, Philip, and Bartholomew, all of them apparently originally disciples of John,—become the first believers and adherents of the Messiah, the nucleus of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.

AFTER two days thus spent at Bethabara the third day Jesus left the company of John, whom apparently he never saw again, and went forth to commence his own work. He did not go up to the Holy City to assert his office before the High Priest and Sanhedrim. He did not go down to commercial Capernaum to preach to the crowds of his countrymen. "There was a marriage at Cana of Galilee," probably of some relation of the Holy Family, for "the mother of Jesus was there," and her subsequent conduct is like that of one who was familiarly acquainted with and interested in the domestic arrangements. "And both Jesus was called, and His disciples to the marriage." And this is not a mere incident between the Temptation and the next great event in the history,—this *is* the next great event, for here He wrought His first miracle; and the marriage feast was not the mere accidental scene and occasion of the miracle, but the miracle rose out of and received its significance from the marriage feast.

The narrative is too familiar to need that we should repeat it here, our business is to point out the significance of "this beginning of miracles."

We note the comment of the Evangelist that in this miracle "He manifested forth His glory." John did no miracles. There is a great gap in the exercise of miraculous powers from the time of Daniel until the days of our Lord. We who are familiar with the multitude of miracles which our Lord wrought afterwards, may easily fail to realise the great effect which this first manifestation of the revival of this Divine Power would have upon the minds of those who witnessed it, in making them feel that "a great Prophet was risen up among them, and that God had visited His people." The Evangelist emphatically adds that after witnessing the miracle "His disciples believed on Him." We note a progressive strengthening of their faith. They believed in Him on the word of John the Baptist ; their faith was confirmed by his supernatural knowledge ; it rises to a more entire belief when they witness His miracle. It was destined to rise through many subsequent degrees before it arrived at that absolute conviction which made them His witnesses to all the world.

We should expect that the first manifestation of this miraculous power would take place on some appropriate occasion, and that it would have some special character and meaning ; and—if we have

courage to confess it—this turning of water into wine at a wedding feast is not the kind of occasion, or the character of miracle, we should have expected. What is the explanation of it ?

We find the significance of the miracle both in the *occasion* of it and in the *nature* of it.

We shall very imperfectly comprehend much of the Gospel if we fail to realise from the beginning the important place which the Church of Christ holds in the Scripture view—in the Divine view—of the work of redemption.

We must first grasp the great truth of the real, indissoluble union of the Divine nature and the human nature in the person of the Christ. Then we must realise that they who are truly Christians are organically united to Christ's humanity by an ineffable, mysterious, but real union ; "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v. 30), so that the Church is the body of Christ, an extension, as it were, of the humanity of Christ. The Church is united to God in Christ. The Church, Head and Body, is the mystical Christ.

This union of the Divine nature and human nature, first, as regards the sacred humanity of Christ, is again and again spoken of in Holy Scripture under the figure of the union which unites man and wife, so that they are no longer twain, but one flesh. And the inspired imagery is not restricted to

this narrower union, but grasps the wider union of God with our humanity in the mystical Christ.

In the Old Testament Scriptures the forty-fifth Psalm is the great Epithalamium—the marriage song—of Christ and his church. First the Psalmist addresses the Royal Bridegroom :—

“Thou art fairer than the children of men, full of grace are thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty, according to thy worship and renown; ride on because of truth, of meekness, and of righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

“Thy arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto thee, even in the midst, among the king’s enemies.

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre; thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore hath God anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

“All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.”

Then turning to the Bride he says :—

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father’s house; so shall the king have pleasure in thy beauty, for he is thy Lord God and worship thou him,” &c.

And this symbolism is wrought out in greater detail in the allegory of the Song of Solomon, which is the elaborate expression of the love of redeemed humanity for God, of the soul for its Lord, of the

church for Christ, of the bride for the Heavenly Bridegroom.¹

St. John the Baptist had already used the same imagery when his disciples complained that the people were deserting him and going to Christ: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John iii. 29).

Our Lord frequently uses the same similitude:—"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding" (Matt. xxii.) represents the external aspect of the Church of Christ in this world. The last scene of Christ's kingdom here on earth is represented in one of the latest parables, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom" (Matt. xxv.) And "the mystical union betwixt Christ and his church" is symbolised, St. Paul tells us, by marriage (Eph. v. 22—end).

And so St. John in the Revelation:—

"I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, singing, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteous-

¹ See also Hosea ii. 14-20, &c.

ness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 6-10).

The marriage at Cana of Galilee was a type of his kingdom,—his church—the nucleus of which was already gathered together, and was there present with him in the persons of his mother and his five disciples.

It is more than a mere beautiful similitude, repeated so often because it so fittingly expresses the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his church,—the noble, redeeming, protecting affection of God,—the dependent, devoted, clinging love of the human soul for God ; it is so profoundly true that the highest act of worship which Christ ordained in his church is that Feast on Bread and Wine, which is more than a type, it is a foretaste, of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We recognise, then, a deep significance and propriety in the *occasion* of "this beginning of miracles."

Again, we find the significance of the miracle in the *nature* of it : the turning of the common element of water into the nobler wine which invigorates and "maketh glad the heart of man." Isaiah uses figurative language of the same kind : "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isaiah lv. 13). "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad

for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah xxxv. 1), typifying that elevation of the whole being and life of humanity to a higher level which Christ came to effect in his kingdom.

The whole incident also is significant of the tenor of the life of Jesus. We have seen that it is most probable that the family at Cana were relatives of our Lord. The first act, then, of the Lord after He has begun to gather together disciples is to take them with Him, not into the wilderness to ascetic discipline, not into the cities to teach and preach, but into a home, to recognise the social ties and fulfil the kindly sympathies of life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SON OF MAN.

BEFORE we go any further in the history let us address ourselves to a question which is one of legitimate interest to every student of the life of our blessed Lord.

In every picture which represents a scene of the Gospel history whether it be the nativity or a miracle or the sacrifice of the cross, the part of the picture upon which the artist has spent most time and thought, and perhaps, like Fra Angelico, most prayer, is the Divine figure in whom the interest centres, whether it be as the holy child on His mother's lap, or the Lord bidding the storm cease, or the dying Saviour.

And we ourselves in endeavouring to meditate upon these subjects, have to begin by painting a mental picture of the scene, as truthfully and as vividly as we can; and we are thus led to consider, not as a question of idle curiosity, but as a matter of devout interest, whether there is any authentic representation or description or any probable tradition of the personal appearance of Jesus.

There is no reason why there might not be. The arts of painting and sculpture were at a high degree of excellence at the time, and the custom of perpetuating the likeness of great men was common. The atrium of every noble Roman house contained a series of busts of ancestors, and the public places of the cities were crowded with the statues of Emperors and distinguished men. The public collections of Europe contain hundreds of such ancient portraits, of such merit as portraits and as works of art as modern art can hardly equal.

We have it on record that the Emperor Alexander Severus placed in his oratory statues of four persons whom he considered to be great religious teachers, viz., Abraham, Orpheus, Christ, and Apollonius of Tyana. But this was two centuries after Christ, and whether His statue was derived from original portraits then extant, or was, like those of Abraham and Orpheus, a mere ideal, we are not told.

There are early pictorial representations of Our Lord among the painted decorations of the Roman Catacombs, and some of these paintings are as early as the second century; but a glance at them is enough to show that they are merely conventional symbolical figures, and were never intended to be portraits. The same judgment applies to the sculptured representations of Gospel scenes which are common on the sarcophagi of the fifth and sixth centuries.

There are many legends which show that it was a subject in which Christian people naturally took a great interest. Such as the legend of the Veil of St. Veronica :—that when our Lord was on His way to Calvary, she lent Him her veil with which to wipe the sweat of agony from His face, and that when He returned it to her, a portrait of the sacred features was found to have been miraculously impressed upon it. Or that of Abgarus, king of Edessa :—that he was a believer in Christ, and wrote to invite him to his dominions, and that our Lord declined to go, but sent the king a portrait of himself painted by St. Luke.

Such legendary portraits, with the growth of the rage for relics, after the fourth century multiplied, so that in the sixth century every principal city and Christian community had some image, picture, cameo, or other representation of Christ, each having a legend which carried it back to the great original. The superstition became so great and objectionable that the Council of Constantinople in 754, A.D., condemned all pictures which pretended to have come down from Christ or His apostles. In fine, an exhaustive study of the subject leads to the conclusion that no authentic portrait of our blessed Lord exists.

There is not even a consistent tradition. At the earliest period at which we find the subject under

discussion, we find no historical statement of what the Lord's appearance was, but only arguments as to what it was likely—from this or that consideration—to be.

The earliest conjectures seem to have been founded upon the evidence supplied by allusions in prophecy; and the conjecture which at first found favour was derived from the famous prophecy in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah :—

“He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

It was perhaps the depressed condition of the early church, when “not many wise, not many learned, were called,” which led it the more readily to receive the idea that the Lord in his humiliation had taken a form which was studiously mean and repulsive. A little later we find that other passages of Scripture were quoted as leading to the opposite conclusion; *e.g.*, Psalm xiv. 2.

“Thou art fairer than the children of men, full of grace are thy lips, because God hath blessed thee for ever.”

“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; . . . he is altogether lovely” (Cant. v. 10, 16).

Isaiah, speaking of the Christ, says (xxxiii. 17) —

“Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty.”

In support of these texts was urged the general consideration that Christ being perfect man, the perfections of his mind, and of his soul, must have been manifested in the perfection of his bodily form and feature.

There is a famous description of the personal appearance of our Lord which professes to have been written by Publius Lentulus, a Roman friend of Pilate, but was really written, it is more probable, about the beginning of the fourth century. It is interesting and, indeed, important, since it gives the general character of face and person which art had probably already adopted, and which the great Italian masters and modern painters have accepted as the type for their representations of Christ. The letter runs thus :—

“ At this time appeared a man who lives till now, a man endowed with great powers. Men call him a great prophet ; his own disciples call him the Son of God. His name is Jesus Christ. He restores the dead to life, and cures the sick of all manner of diseases.

“ This man is of noble and well-proportioned stature, with a face full of kindness and yet firmness, so that the beholders both love him and fear him. His hair is the colour of wine [yellow probably] and golden at the root—straight and without lustre, but from the level of the ears curling and glossy, and

divided down the centre after the fashion of the Nazarenes [*i.e.* Nazarites]. His forehead is even and smooth, his face without blemish, and enhanced by a tempered bloom. His countenance ingenuous and kind. Nose and mouth in no way faulty. His beard is full, of the same colour as his hair, and forked in form; his eyes blue and extremely brilliant.

“In reproof and rebuke he is formidable; in exhortation and teaching gentle and amiable of tongue. None have seen him to laugh, but many on the contrary to weep. His person is tall, his hands beautiful and straight. In speaking he is deliberate and grave, and little given to loquacity. In beauty surpassing most men.”

This is not, we repeat, an authentic document, and it is not the record of a consistent early tradition, but it is a proof of the early adoption of that type of person and countenance which has been generally adopted by art, and which the devout imagination of subsequent ages has found satisfactory.

It will at once occur to the reader that golden hair and blue eyes, and a blooming complexion, are not the prevalent type of Eastern physiognomy. But it is a type which does occur, though rarely, and is highly regarded. We are reminded that David was “ruddy and of a beautiful countenance,¹ and fair of

¹ See 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 18; xvii. 42.

eyes" (marginal reading), "a comely person," "ruddy and of a fair countenance," which the commentators assert to mean that he was of this rare type; and the thought is suggested that, as so often happens, the constitution of the great ancestor had reappeared in this remote descendant, and that there was a special human propriety in his title of the Son of David; or, in other words, that David, the king, warrior, statesman, prophet, poet, the man of widest spiritual experience and deepest human sympathy of all men known to us, was, more completely than we commonly think, a type of David's Lord.

In one particular, we may be allowed to suggest, artists seem to have often erred, viz., in representing our Lord as of middle age. This one perfect unspoiled example of humanity, this flower of the great human race, had only just entered upon His brilliant manhood; He was only thirty years of age when He left the peaceful, pure, unworldly home in which He had been reared, the mountain village in which He had bloomed, and entered upon the grand career of His public life and work. The gravity, wisdom, and authority which appear in the narrative of the ministry may well, indeed, give the impression of ripened powers and experience; and it adds to the grandeur—and, what is more important, to the truth—of our conception of the history if we bear in mind that all this gentleness and sweetness was

exhibited by a youth of brilliant genius, in the first flush of a great career ; that He was little more than a youth who manifested this ripe wisdom, and practical sagacity, and lofty authority, and this power of a great character over those with whom He had to do.

His dress was that which had become almost universal among the inhabitants of the Mediterranean world—the tunic and pallium. His tunic,—“the coat without seam, woven from the top throughout,”—is spoken of as if of more than usual value, the handsome gift, perhaps, of some devout disciple ; and the pallium, we may suppose, would not be of inferior material. A shawl of many colours may have girded the white tunic about the middle, and the pallium was not improbably striped like the modern haik of the East. Sandals completed the simple, classical, and dignified costume.

He was a man among men. There did not shine forth from Him any token of superhuman dignity which at once made Him a marked person, and set Him apart from free association with His fellow men. And He did not, by any unusual reserve of manner, keep Himself aloof from others. He mingled among men in a natural, frank, unpretending way. He travelled about on foot, according to the custom, in a country in which the roads are chiefly footpaths. He conversed readily with the people about Him.

He accepted the hospitalities offered Him. He had a broad humaneness of character which was not of any particular type. We Englishmen do not regard Him as a Jew, so all the nationalities of Christendom have regarded Him as a Man, with nothing to narrow His humanity down to any particular national type, so as to make them feel that He was not of the same nationality as themselves.

We see the same absence of class feeling in His intercourse with different ranks and classes of people. He meets every one on the broad ground of common humanity, man to man. He moves among the highest of his countrymen with natural, unconscious dignity ; He moves among the common people with the frank, natural courtesy which respects the dignity of manhood in the masses of mankind. He recognises the essential equality of man to man.

But beyond this we see in Him a profound and tender respect for the dignity of human nature, even in the fallen and degraded—what wonder, since, in His eyes, all mankind were fallen and degraded ; and He esteemed fallen and degraded humanity worth the Incarnation and the Cross to regenerate and restore.

His courteous conversation with the woman of Sychar, His pathetic compassion for the penitent woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and for the woman taken in adultery, His acceptance of

Matthew's invitation to dine with his fellow publicans, His inviting Himself to dine with Zaccheus,—these are only examples of that free association with all classes which made the Pharisees complain that “He was a friend of publicans and sinners,” that “He receiveth sinners and eateth with them”; criticisms which drew from Him the blessed motive of his unusual conduct,—“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” He came from heaven and took our nature upon Him in order to seek and to save; so he puts Himself beside the lowest on the ground of common humanity, and wins confidence and sympathy, and then seeks to raise the lowly to the level of His own perfect manhood.

One notable feature of our Lord's external bearing is the calm and repose of His ordinary manner. He is sympathetic but not emotional. There is no effort, haste, eagerness, or anxiety; it is the calm of perfect faith, and consciousness of power equal to the achievement. It is not the result of natural impassibility. He looked round with *grief* at the blindness and hardness of some; He *wept* at the thought of the dreadful fate which He prophesied against Jerusalem; He spoke with stern *rebuke* to Peter; His eye kindled with *anger* as He poured forth a scathing torrent of denunciation against the Scribes and Pharisees—“Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

Is there not a trait of kindness of manner in the numerous records of His laying His hand on people? He *touch*ed the eyes of the blind; He *put His fingers* in the ears of the deaf; He *laid His hand* upon the sick; it was His habit. He could do no mighty work there, save that he *laid His hand* upon a few sick folk and healed them. "When the sun was set" they brought the sick, "and *He laid His hands upon every one of them*, and healed them." He called the deformed woman to Him and He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight. "He *took the blind man by the hand*, and led him out of the town, and then *put His hands upon him*." To the leper Jesus *put forth His hand and touch*ed him. Peter's mother-in-law; He *took her by the hand*, and immediately the fever left her. He took Jairus's daughter "*by the hand*." So with children, "He *took* a child and set him in the midst of them, and when He had taken Him in His arms," &c., He said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and He *took them up in His arms*, and *put His hands* upon them, and blessed them."

All this may help us to realise the true humanness of the Son of Man, who at the same time was Son of God, the perfect human naturalness of the life of Him who at the same time was in heaven (John iii. 13).

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HOLY CITY.

JERUSALEM differed from all the other great capitals of ancient or modern times in this, that it was a mountain city. Situated on the backbone of limestone hills, which runs from north to south through the middle of the country, the ravines west south and east of it isolated it on three sides, and though surrounded by loftier hills, gave it the safety and dignity of a precipitous site.

It was architecturally a grand city. The pile of buildings which constituted the Temple, on its eastern hill, was one of the wonders of the world ; the series of fortresses and towers which protected and adorned the city were not unworthy of the last builder of the Temple.

The fortress-palace of Antonia on the north-east, as described by Josephus, was a grand building ; and the palace of Herod, in the north-west angle of the city, with the group of wall towers adjoining and communicating with it, formed another grand group of buildings ; and between these two groups extended

a strong and lofty wall strengthened by mural towers ; the whole forming a strong series of defences on the north side, where the city was most accessible. A less massive wall, with the usual mural towers running along the edge of the steep declivities and picturesquely following their sinuosities, was enough to complete the natural defences of the city on the other sides. Internally, while the general slope of the plateau was from west to east, the lines of streets ran in parallel lines from north to south. The old Asmonean palace, adorned by Herod, occupied the summit of the hill of Zion, on its eastern side, overlooking the Temple. The Xystus adjoined it. The palace of the High Priest was in the same quarter of the city.

No doubt the courtiers of Herod the Great and the other princes of the country had imitated his example in the sumptuousness of their residences in the capital. And though Herod's palace was now only occupied by the Roman Procurator on his visits at the Feasts, yet the High Priest, and the chief priests, and the members of the Sanhedrim, had their sumptuous residences in the city, and the wealthy nobles of the whole country probably had their palaces there, which they occupied on their periodical visits at the great festivals.

Again, Jerusalem differed from other capitals in this, that it was the centre of a great periodical

pilgrimage. We are all familiar with descriptions of the gathering of the annual caravan of pilgrims outside Cairo and its march across the desert to Mecca ; and with descriptions of the Christian pilgrims who every Easter crowd into the Jordan and struggle for a place at the holy sepulchre. These descriptions may help us to realise the scenes which Jerusalem witnessed three times a year at the great festivals.

For a week before the festival the whole country from Dan to Beersheba was in motion. The inhabitants of each little hill-top village set out together in their best array, trooping across the hills in cheerful groups ; at every cross road they fell in with similar groups, and as these crowds fell into the great main roads of the country, they formed an almost continuous stream of pilgrims. On their way to the Passover one man in each family would carry a lamb across his shoulders for the sacrifice ; if the feast of Tabernacles was the occasion, one of each group would bear a basket loaded with corn, fruits, grapes, and flowers, the firstfruits of the land. They lightened the journey with songs. And thus, rising before dawn, resting in the heat of the day, and journeying again till night, the streams of pilgrims marched up towards the holy city and poured into all its gates. Not only the inhabitants of the holy land, but large bodies from the great colonies of their

race, and groups from all the large towns of the civilised world came up to every feast. A caravan from Mesopotamia,¹ and another from Damascus, mostly perhaps on horseback, taking the road down the Jordan valley and going up through Jericho. A caravan from Alexandria and another from Cyrene and another from Cyprus crowding the decks of the ships which landed those at Joppa and these at Ptolemais. A caravan of Idumæans coming through the rocky defiles of the mountains of Moab. Individuals from still more widely scattered places, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes, and Arabians," all flocked up to the great national festivals at the holy city. The great majority on foot in family

¹ Jews, according to Philo, were very numerous at this period in Mesopotamia, especially in the cities on both banks of the Euphrates. Petronius, the Prefect of Syria, was so struck with the great numbers which came to Jerusalem at the feast from those quarters that he feared a powerful force of them might come thence to help their countrymen to resist the setting-up of the Emperor's image in the Temple. One quarter of Alexandria, then the second city of the empire, was inhabited by Jews; their quarter was divided by walls and gates from the rest of the city, and they were ruled by their own officers under their own laws. There were other great colonies of Jews, in Cyrenaica, Cyprus, and Antioch.

groups, the richer families on horseback with servants and sumpter horses; the princes of the land, and chieftains who had travelled from far through dangerous deserts and defiles, with armed escorts. Philip the tetrarch from his capital of Cæsarea with his guard of Babylonian horsemen¹ clad in armour; Herod Antipas, from Macherus, surrounded by his "lords, high captains and chief estates of Galilee," and guarded by his Gallic¹ mercenaries. The Procurator also always came up from Cæsarea-by-the-Sea, with a strong force of legionaries and of horse-men, and took up his residence in the palace of Herod the Great, to maintain order and to guard against fanatical outbreaks on the part of the immense number of pilgrims in a state of religious excitement, which had more than once occurred.²

It is estimated that the number of pilgrims present at the Passover when Titus laid siege to the city, amounted to two millions seven hundred thousand and two hundred.

They filled the houses, they pitched their tents on the open ground around the Temple,³ and perhaps in the open spaces—the "broad places"—of the city,

¹ See Josephus, "Antiquities," XVII., 2, § 2; XIII., 11, § 1; "Wars," II., 17, § 9.

² *E.g.*, at the Passover after the death of Herod the Great and that of the following year, Josephus, "Wars," II., 1, § 3.

³ Josephus, "Antiquities," XVII., 9, § 3.

they lodged in the adjoining villages. From early dawn till nightfall, and during the Passover through all the moon-light night, the streets of Jerusalem were filled with a bustling multitude, and the great court and wide porticos of the Temple were crowded with devotees.

It is here, at Jerusalem, at the Feast, that we should have expected that the Messiah would have been proclaimed, and would have wrought His beginning of miracles. As His brethren said on a later occasion, "If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world"; and our Lord's reply to them may answer us: "My time is not yet come"; but He did go up to the Feast.

So not many days after the miracle at Cana, "the Feast of the Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

His first manifestation of Himself was by the exercise of an act of authority in the Temple. For the convenience of the pilgrims, oxen and sheep for sacrifice were allowed to be kept for sale in the outer court of the Temple itself; and since the offering to the treasury of the Temple of Roman or Greek money, with its idolatrous images, was regarded as a profanation, the money-changers were allowed to have their tables in the court in order to exchange these foreign moneys for shekels.

"And Jesus found in the Temple those that sold

oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting : and when he had made a scourge of small cords,"—after the symbolical manner of the ancient prophets,—“ he drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables, and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise ” (John ii. 13–16).

The people seem to have submitted to this peremptory treatment, His majesty overbore all feeling of resistance ; they recognised that He who thus acted claimed to be a prophet, and to be acting by Divine command. This explains, also, the action of the authorities of the Temple, who did not find fault with his rebuke of a practice which they had permitted, but only asked him, “What sign showest thou, seeing that thou doest these things?”—Prove thy claim to this character, and justify this action, by the usual miraculous credentials ; by some sign, for example, like Elijah’s fire from heaven on Carmel or Isaiah’s going back of the sun-dial of Ahaz. They recognised that he claimed that old prophetic authority, akin to the dictatorial authority in the ancient republic of Rome,—which superseded all ordinary magistracies ; but they asked for a verification of his claim.

“ Jesus answered, Destroy this temple, and in three

days I will raise it up." The Evangelist explains that He spake of the temple of His body, and that He referred to His resurrection. This was the sign He offered. And we remember that on two subsequent occasions when they asked for a sign He said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4). The offered sign was again His resurrection from the dead.

We note, then, that from the first, and always, he foreknew His own resurrection, and that He appealed to it, from the first, as the great evidence of his character and words. This ambiguous application of the word temple to his body requires a little further consideration. We are familiar with the idea, because St. Paul says of our bodies that they are "Temples of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us" (Cor. vi. 19), and this is through our unity in the Body of Christ. The Temple was a temple because God dwelt in it, and our Lord's humanity was a Temple because God the Son dwelt in it. We recognise, then, in this utterance a covert allusion to the fact of the union of the Divinity with the humanity in His Person.

Again, we note that, as on the first occasion of His coming to the Temple at twelve years old, He had called it His Father's house,—“Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?” (Luke ii. 49), so now again He uses the same phrase, “Make not my Father's

house an house of merchandise": calling God His Father, and Himself the Son of God. The phrase might be taken in a lower sense as one of the recognised titles of the Messiah, in which it had already been applied to him by Nathanael, in which the Jews would, in all probability understand our Lord to use it now. But we can hardly doubt that the higher sense was always latent in the title when applied to the Messiah. Thus our Lord, in His first public utterance in the Temple before assembled Israel, claims to be the Messiah, and acts with authority in the House of God; enunciates the great truth which lies at the root of His Person and Work; and appeals to His Resurrection from the dead on the third day as the great and sufficient evidence of it all.

We gather from a cursory remark of St. John that our Lord proceeded during the days of the Feast to work miracles,—which are not specified,—and that "many believed in His name" when they saw them (John ii. 23). The incident in the Temple could not have happened without creating a considerable sensation, and the subsequent miracles would greatly intensify the public interest in this remarkable person who had so suddenly appeared in the midst of them.

The incident of Nicodemus's visit to our Lord shows that Jesus had attracted attention in the very highest ranks of the nation. It is not our purpose to dwell

here on our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, but we may briefly point out that St. John seems to give the heads of our Lord's discourse, and that these brief heads include the great truths of His Gospel :—

His own pre-existence in heaven, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man"; with the further mysterious indication of his simultaneous life in earth and in heaven,—“even the Son of Man, which is in heaven”; His mission by the father, and the object of his coming, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; His sacrifice, and the saving effect of it, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; fallen man's incapacity for the higher life, without a re-impartation of the Holy Spirit, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"; a promise of the gift of that Spirit to those who should enter into the new dispensation, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"; entering into the kingdom of heaven, then, was not merely entering into an earthly reign of peace and righteousness, but was being grafted into a higher

phase of spiritual life, so that it was like being born over again into a new and heavenly life. The mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, pardon through the sacrifice of the cross, faith in Christ, the work of the Spirit, the agency of the church, all are here.

We note that our Lord did not begin with high-raised expectations of immediate acceptance among His people, He foresaw His death from the first. He did not gradually develop a scheme of doctrine, we find all the essential features of it, its deepest and highest truths, in His very first discourse.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LANDMARKS OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY.

IN studying the early portion of the Lord's life, the aim of this work has required us to consider with some completeness all the incidents of the life which the Evangelists have recorded. But in dealing with the abundant materials which the sacred narratives supply of the public ministry, the limits, within which it is desirable that this work should be restricted, will compel us to pursue a different method. We shall have to select the features which seem to be of special importance to our aim. But it seems desirable to endeavour to give, though ever so briefly, a connected sketch of the public ministry, arranged,—so far as it can be so arranged,—in chronological order, and to point out the broad features which characterise its different portions.

There are certain great landmarks which help us to grasp and remember the plan and progress of the history.

First of all, we call attention to two very important events, or groups of events, which enable us to divide

the period into three portions, each of which has its special characteristic features. These critical groups of events are,—(1) the Confession of our Lord's Divinity by the Apostles, the Discourse on the Church and Ministry, the Prophecy of the Passion and Death, and the Transfiguration ; (2) The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

The first portion of the public life previously to Peter's confession was spent chiefly in Galilee, with the occasional visits to Jerusalem at the feasts, which were the duty of a pious Jew. The teaching is chiefly an unfolding to sympathising hearers of the nature of the kingdom,—as in the conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the Sermon on the Mount, the group of Parables of Matt. xiii., and the Discourse on the Bread of Life, in the synagogue of Capernaum (John vi.). The majority of the miracles were wrought in this earlier half of the ministry. Especially we notice that, immediately on his entering upon the Messiahship, he began to gather disciples ; at an early period he chose the twelve Apostles ; after they had been his constant companions for some months he sent them out to preach, and they returned to him towards the end of this first portion of the history. A thoughtful consideration of the subject will show that, throughout this period the Lord was gradually leading the Apostles up to the confession of his Divinity.

The second portion of the public ministry which follows the confession of the Divinity presents these especial characteristics : the scene of the history is, not entirely but for the most part, in Jerusalem and Judea, and the country beyond Jordan ; miracles do not cease, but they become less frequent. The discourses are of two kinds, (*a*) to the Apostles, are specially adapted to prepare them for the passion and death of their Lord, and the spiritual nature of the kingdom ; (*β*) to outside hearers, and these are no longer instructions addressed to a multitude of more or less sympathising hearers, but arguments addressed to disbelievers, disputations with opponents, parables aimed at the prejudices of the people, and denunciations of the hypocrisy and wickedness of the Pharisaic sect.

The third portion of the public life, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the death upon the cross, extends only over six days, but its history in the Gospels occupies as large a space as either of the others, and is crowded with events of infinite consequence. The actors in the great drama are now brought on the stage together—disciples and disbelievers, chief priests and scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees, Roman governor and Herodian king ; the doctrine of the previous ministry is brought to a focus—the claim to Divinity and to Royalty, the prophecy of Passion and of Resurrection ; the most

striking parables, the keenest controversies with opponents, the most sublime discourses to the disciples; the grandest events, the Triumph, the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Agony in the Garden, the Arrest, the Trial, the Passion, and the Death.

We shall endeavour to summarise the first and second of these portions of the public ministry. The consideration of the Confession of the Divinity, and of the Triumphal Entry will require an ampler exposition; and in studying the solemn events of the Holy Week, and the great events which follow, it will again be necessary to adopt the more detailed method of the earlier portion of the work.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUMMARY OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY.

HOW long Jesus remained in Jerusalem on the occasion of the first Passover of His public ministry is not stated, perhaps only for the week of the feast. He next went not to Nazareth or to Capernaum, but back to the Jordan where he kept a body of disciples about Him. He took up John's preaching "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and His disciples baptized those who offered themselves. The natural jealousy of John's disciples when they saw that Jesus baptized and all men came to him, brought forth that reply of the Baptist's so sublime in its humility and self-abnegation "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom . . . He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 27-30). And he renews his testimony to Him in remarkable words "He that cometh from above is above all, he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and

hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 31-36).

After a period of uncertain duration John was seized and cast into prison, and then it would seem Jesus also closed His ministry of preparation and entered upon another phase of his work.

On His way to Galilee, by the nearest route across Samaria, he came to the neighbourhood of Sychar. And while His disciples went into the neighbouring town to buy provisions, he sat to rest by the famous Well of Jacob, which was in the wide entrance of the valley in whose narrower gorge the town is situated. It was now that the remarkable conversation occurred with the Samaritan woman who came from the neighbouring town to draw water. We can only point out the chief significance of the conversation which St. John has given at some length. After allegorising the water of the well, and speaking of the approaching changes which should abrogate the temple worship, he is at length led to reveal himself to her.

"The woman saith, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ : when he is come he will teach us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

We can only call attention to this remarkable revelation of himself to this Samaritan woman, His con-

sent to stay in their town and teach them more fully ; the belief of many ; the terms in which they express their belief indicating the burden of his teaching, "we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

This was the only occasion on which our Lord preached to the Samaritans :—" I am not sent," He said, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was an instance of His readiness, to preach in season and out of season, and to give of His truth and grace to all who sought it of Him.

Arrived in Galilee He entered upon that systematic tour of preaching and working miracles of which so many incidents are recorded by the first three Evangelists. His reputation had preceded Him, "there went a fame of him through all the region round about" (Luke iv. 14) ; "the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast" (John iv. 45). At first he joined on his preaching to that of John and to his own previous Ministry of preparation. He "came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying :—The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel" (Mark i. 15). We call attention to the remarkable phrase "the gospel of the Kingdom of God"; it expresses in a phrase that which is the fact, but

which is often overlooked, viz., that Christianity was presented to mankind not as a new religion,—since the fall there had only been one Religion, salvation through faith in the atonement of the sacrifice of the Son of God,—it was presented as the establishment of a kingdom, a divine or heavenly Kingdom upon earth, destined to be universal and everlasting.

The first incident recorded is the second miracle at Cana, when a certain officer of the court of Herod Antipas whose son was sick at Capernaum, hearing that Jesus was in Cana, went thither, and obtained by his faith and importunity the gracious assurance, “Go thy way thy, son liveth,” and at that very hour he found afterwards the fever had left him. Next we hear of Him at Nazareth, where He had been brought up; at first “they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth”; but on His proceeding to intimate that He could not work any miracle among them because of their want of faith in Him, they justified his judgment of them by a sudden outbreak of violence, in which they sought His life. It would almost seem as if He thus offered to reside where He had been brought up, and only on their proving the truth of His words that a prophet hath no honour in his own country, “leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt in Capernaum.”

Hitherto Jesus had had disciples; now He proceeds to a further step in the organisation of the kingdom:—He began to select His apostles, men who should be hearers of all His teachings, formed on His example, that they might hereafter be His witnesses, the depositories of His doctrine, the foundation stones of His church, the ministers of His grace, and the executors of His will. On the same day, it would seem, He called Peter and Andrew, James and John; and, after the significant miracle of the draught of fishes, in which He showed how He would give them success as “fishers of men,” “they brought their ships to land, and forsook all, and followed Him” (Matthew iv. 18, 22; Mark i. 11, 20; Luke v. 1, 11). The other apostles He probably selected from time to time within a short period.

At Capernaum his teaching and his miracles rapidly increased his fame:—

“Straightway on the Sabbath-day he went to the synagogue, and taught, and they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”

He did not merely interpret Scripture as a commentator on God's word, He spoke as one who had a new word from God to deliver. Moreover, in the midst of the synagogue service a remarkable incident occurred. There was present one possessed

with an unclean spirit, who cried aloud in the midst of the assembly :—

“Let us alone : what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.”

This acknowledgment of His claims by the evil spirit was calculated to impress the people, and what followed, still further to raise their wonder and their belief in Him ; for Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, “Hold thy peace and come out of him,” and the spirit threw him into a paroxysm, and cried aloud, and came out of him. “They were all amazed and said among themselves, What thing is this ? what new doctrine is this ? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.”

“And,” says the evangelist in a parenthesis, “his fame spread abroad throughout all the regions round about Galilee” (Mark i. 21 ; Luke iv. 33).

Immediately after the synagogue service Jesus went to Peter’s house to dine, and finding his wife’s mother sick of a fever He took her by the hand and immediately the fever left her ; and she was so entirely restored that she at once resumed her household cares, and ministered to Peter and his illustrious guest. “And when the sun was set,” and the Sabbath therefore over, “all the city was gathered at the door ; and all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them, and devils came

out of many, crying and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God" (Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29; Luke iv. 38).

"And in the morning" of the next day, "rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed him, and when they had found him they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth." And He commenced that missionary tour which St. Matthew thus summarises,—

"Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people" (Matt. iv. 23).

Among the miracles of healing thus alluded to, the healing of a leper is particularly mentioned by all three evangelists, perhaps because, leprosy being looked upon as a divinely-sent infliction, and a special type of sin, its cure was a striking evidence of divine power, and a type of the healing of the sins of human nature (Matt. viii. 2; Mark i. 40; Luke v. 12). On the occasion of a return to Capernaum we read that "it was noised abroad that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, inso-much that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door, and he preached the word unto them." This was the time of the cure of

the paralytic let down "through the roof"; and is remarkable as the first instance recorded in which Jesus connected spiritual absolution with healing; and the Scribes and Pharisees who were present accused him of blasphemy,—“Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” and He asserted that “the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” And the people “were all amazed and glorified God, which had given such power unto men,” and “were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day” (Luke v. 21–26, and Matt. ix. 8).

About this time occurred the call of St. Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an apostle.

Here may be intercalated the visit to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, recorded in the fifth chapter of St. John; which had serious results, and forms a turning point in the history. Jesus healed the man who lay in the porch of Bethesda on the Sabbath-day. The rulers considered this a breach of the commandment, and concluded from it against His pretensions to be the Messiah:—“This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath.” In His defence of Himself from the charge he made claims which still further alarmed and outraged the hearers. Our Lord appeals to John’s testimony; He appeals to His own miracles; He appeals to the voice of God at His baptism; He appeals to the Scriptures:—

“Ye sent unto John and he bare witness unto the truth ; but I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. . . . Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.”

“The Jews sought the more to kill him because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said that God was his father, making himself equal with God.” This was the beginning of the open antagonism of the chief men of the nation against Jesus, which ultimately resulted in His trial, condemnation, and death.

St. Matthew groups together with this violation of the Sabbath two other similar instances,—the plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath, as they walked through the cornfields, and the healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue of Capernaum (Matt. xii. 1, 9). There are two other instances recorded (five in all) in which Christ disregarded the Pharisaical mode of keeping the Sabbath ; healing the man with the dropsy at the house of the Pharisee (Luke xvi. 7), and healing the man who was born blind at Jerusalem, at the time of one of the Feasts (Luke vi. 14). They made it the test question on which they decided against his claims ; while our Lord's persistence in thus dealing with the Sabbath, and his declaration, “the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath,” seems to indicate that some deep

significance lay beneath his persistence. Was it that the question was whether the Messiah was to be tested by the glosses which the Pharisees had put on the law and the prophets; or whether the reasoning of the paralytic was to be admitted by the Pharisees,—“He that made me whole said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk”; and of the blind man who said, “Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth: if this man were not of God, he could do nothing”; and of the people, “Can a man that is a sinner do these miracles that this man doeth?” Their final conclusion was, as we learn from all the Evangelists, that the Pharisaic party, whose religious prejudices were offended, took counsel with the Herodian party, who were afraid of the civil tumults which the enthusiasm of the people for this claimant of the Messiahship might occasion, “what they might do to Jesus,” says St. Luke; “how they might destroy him,” say St. Matthew and St. Mark.

We call attention to the next important step in the development of the Lord's “plan.” He had returned to Galilee, where the people were still generally disposed in His favour.

“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day he called unto him his disciples, and out of them HE CHOSE TWELVE, whom he ordained that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils ; whom he also named apostles.”

It was a great manifestation of power, that He could not only work miracles Himself, but that He could give to others the same power. It was a great step in the organisation of His church.

He addressed an ordination charge to these newly-appointed ministers, recorded Matt. x. 5-42.

The SERMON ON THE MOUNT seems to have followed soon after the ordination of the apostles. It is an elaborate declaration of the relation of the New Dispensation to the Old. As the law was given from Mount Sinai, as the blessings and cursings were pronounced when Israel entered Canaan from Ebal and Gerizim, so now our Lord enunciates the new law, and it begins with the blessings and cursings of the Gospel Covenant.¹

The most striking feature of this great discourse is the assumption by Christ of authority to deal with the law, given by God under such awful sanctions, amidst the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, spoken with His own voice, written with His own finger upon the monuments of stone. He declares

¹ We assume that St. Luke's sermon (vi. 20-end) is the same as St. Matthew's sermon (v., vi., vii.).

that He did not come to abrogate the old law but to fulfil,—to fill full, *i.e.* to complete it. And so He takes the Decalogue, and extends it beyond outward acts to words, and thoughts, and intentions. Not only, Do not kill, but do not give way to excessive anger; not only, Do not commit adultery, but do not indulge a loose thought. The old law tells men what they are to do and not to do; the new law tells them what they ought to be. The old law speaks of outward manifestations of evil; the new law deals with the character and dispositions of the heart. At the end of the sermon St. Matthew repeats the remark that the people “were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes” (Matt. vii. 28, 29).

About this time must be placed the renewed declaration, made by all three evangelists, of the continued spread of Christ’s reputation, not only throughout Judea and Samaria and Galilee, but “throughout all Syria,” and “Decapolis” (Matt. iv. 24, 25), in Idumea and beyond Jordan, and the country of Tyre and Sidon (Mark iii. 1—12, and Luke vi. 17—19); and how “great multitudes” from those countries “followed him,” and brought their sick to Him, and He healed them, “and the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him and healed them all” (Luke vi. 19).

To about this period also belongs the fact, men-

tioned by all three evangelists, that His relatives came to expostulate with Him on the danger He ran in denouncing the Pharisees, and to use their influence to restrain Him.

Besides the Twelve thus solemnly called out and ordained, there was also a group of women who attached themselves to Jesus. We are first told of them in Luke viii. 1, 3, when some of the most prominent of them are expressly named: "Mary called Magdalene, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to him of their substance." This is in the earlier part of the ministry. We are told of them again at the cross:—

"Many women were beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children" (Matt. xxvii. 55, 56).

During His subsequent journey through Galilee He was accompanied by these two groups, the group of apostles and the group of ministering women.

Some of the incidents of the journey are the healing of the Centurion's servant, in which He foretold the admission of the Gentiles, the failure of the Jews.

"Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come, &c., and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out" (Matt. viii. 10-12).

The raising of the widow's son at Nain. The first of the raisings from the dead, which sent a new thrill of wonder and rejoicing through the people.

"There came a great fear upon all, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people" (Luke vii. 16).

The message from John the Baptist; the anointing of His feet by the sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee; the healing of the blind and dumb man, when the Scribes from Jerusalem explained his miracles by attributing them to Satanic power.

In the usual harmonies of the Gospel the parables of the 13th chapter of St. Matthew are introduced here, but it is difficult to suppose that our Lord had not from the beginning of his public ministry made use of this striking form of popular teaching which he continued to employ to the end.

The same day at evening as he crossed the lake occurred the stupendous miracle of the stilling of the storm, when:—

"He rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea. Peace, be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" (Matt. viii. ; Mark iv. ; Luke viii.)

And having arrived at the south-east corner of the lake, He landed and proceeded towards the city of

Gadara, and on the way healed the two demoniacs, and suffered the devils to go into the herd of swine, and when the people in fear besought Him to depart out of their country He allowed himself to be rejected by them ; but sent the demoniac, who wished to follow Him, back to his own city to be his witness to them of " what great things Jesus had done for him, and had had compassion on him " (Mark v. 19).

On His return to Capernaum He healed the woman who had an issue of blood, and raised Jairus's daughter. Afterwards He healed two blind men, and a dumb man possessed, when the Pharisees again said " He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils " (Matthew ix. 27, 34). Yet again He seems to have visited Nazareth (" his own country ") and taught in their synagogue, but they were offended at Him.

" Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And he marvelled because of their unbelief."

The apostles having been in attendance on their Lord for some time, He now sent them out through the villages to preach, saying " the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and gave them power to work miracles to attract attention to their mission, and to authenticate their message. " They departed and went through the towns preaching the Gospel [" that

men should repent" Mark vi.] and healing everywhere." "And they returned and told him all things both what they had done, and what they had taught" (Mark vi.).

About now, after a year's imprisonment, John the Baptist was beheaded in prison.

About this time we must place the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with the five loaves and a few small fishes. A miracle so important that it is the only one which is mentioned in all the Gospels. Not perhaps so striking in itself as many other of the miracles, but important in its spiritual significance, as evolved in our Lord's subsequent discourse founded upon it. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; which the son of man shall give unto you;" "the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world." And when they objected, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" He reiterated more impressively:—

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day, for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me" (John vi. 27, &c.).

It was a plain declaration of His own pre-existence in heaven ; that He came down from heaven to give spiritual life, everlasting life to mankind ; that this life depended for every man on a living union with Christ ; that this union was effected by "eating" Him. In speaking of his flesh and blood there was a covert allusion to his death. In speaking of his flesh being meat indeed and his blood drink indeed there was a plain allusion to the great Sacrament of the Holy Communion, which He would afterwards appoint.

There was something in this teaching which offended many of those who hitherto were reckoned among his disciples. We gather that it was the declaration that he came down from heaven : "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" and the remonstrance of Jesus is "Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. Our Lord replies, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh

profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." It is not a gross carnal eating of my material flesh I speak of, but a spiritual manducation whereby you shall be partakers of me. But notwithstanding "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." It was a turning-point in the history. All the Jews were willing to receive a Messiah after their own ideas of him, but as the true nature of the Messiah and His work was unfolded, the worldly-minded and unbelieving fell off from Him ; the spiritually-minded and believing were carried on, often with difficulty and hesitation, but were carried on to realise and embrace the great truth of the divinity of the Saviour, and to be content with a salvation through sacrifice, and to be willing to forego their dreams of earthly power and splendour, and to share their master's sufferings here that they might be partakers of His kingdom and glory hereafter. This is the first great development of the truth to the general body of the disciples,—it had already been communicated to Nicodemus ; and this is the first great defection of those who had been disciples. The defection seems to have been so great as to lead to the fear that it might extend even to those most closely attached to Him :—

"Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of

eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Some still believed that He was the Messiah, that His words were true, and they accepted this development of His teaching, that He came down from heaven, and that it was by union with Him that men receive everlasting life. We must not omit to mention that the miracles of the previous night, when Jesus walked on the sea, and sustained Peter so that he also walked on the sea, had strengthened their faith in Him, so that "they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew xiv. 33).

A journey to the country of Tyre and Sidon for the sake of rest comes in here, with the incident of the healing of the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman. On His return from this retreat Jesus visited the region of the Ten Cities which lay on the east side of the Lake of Galilee, inhabited by a mixed population, among whom were only a proportion of Jews; but the fame of Jesus had gone forth there also, so that "great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them; inasmuch that the multitude wondered . . . and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matthew xv. 30, 31).

The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida-

Judias is one of this group of miracles (Mark viii. 22), and the feeding of the four thousand. Thence He journeyed northward to Cæsarea Philippi at the foot of Hermon. Here we are arrived at the first of the prominent groups which divide the period of the ministry.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MIRACLES.

IN devoting a chapter to the miracles of our Lord, it is with the intention of making some general observations only on this remarkable feature of our Lord's work. We call to mind in this connexion that "John worked no miracle," for he did not bring any new revelation; he did not share in the work of Christ; he came only to prepare the way for Him who should bring the new and fullest revelation, and establish the new and last dispensation. We observe that our Lord wrought no miracles until He entered upon His office of Messiah. The apocryphal gospels relate a number of miracles which they say Jesus wrought in His infancy and boyhood, and it is very natural that an inventor of a history of Jesus should suppose that the divinity within Him should manifest itself throughout His life in wonderful ways. But we have already seen that the obscure life of thirty years was a time of patient waiting and preparation and self-restraint. It is in harmony with the rest of the history that no miracles are wrought till they are needed as a feature of the ministry.

As soon as Jesus has been designated as Messiah by the word of prophecy, and by the voice and sign from heaven, and has received the anointing of the Holy Ghost, then miracles are expected from Him as an appropriate part of the character of the Messiah. The divine mission of Moses was authenticated by miracle, and it was to be expected that the "Prophet like unto Moses" (Deut. xviii. 15), who was to introduce a better dispensation, would likewise prove His divine authority by divine power. Isaiah had prophesied that it would be so (xxxv. 5, 6). Every one expected it. It is remarkable that before he had exhibited any such power, Satan assumed his possession of it, and the Temptation consisted, in part, in the suggestion to make a wrongful use of it. It is remarkable that His mother not only expected it, but anticipated the time and way in which He would first exercise it. The people expected it of the Messiah; the Jews said, "When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (John vii. 31). He Himself appealed to His miracles on several occasions as one of the evidences that He was the Messiah, *e.g.*, when John sent two of his disciples to ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. xi.; Luke vii.), and to the people generally (John v. 36; xiv. 11.).

The last paragraph leads us on to the further observation that the miracles were not intended to

overawe and compel men to acknowledge His claims. He was often¹ challenged to show a sign from heaven : in this sense he always declined to do so ; and the reason is easily discovered. It is that no wonders, however striking, have the power to compel belief, independently of the moral condition of those to whom they are manifested. The miracles were intended as one part, and an important part, of the evidence of divine mission ; they called attention to the miracle-worker ; they strengthened and confirmed the faith of those who were disposed to believe on other grounds ; but they were not intended and were not sufficient, to compel unwilling souls to believe.

When we observe that Jesus wrought no miracle till he entered upon the office of the Christ, and that Satan's temptation was to an abuse of the power which He had recently received, but had not yet exercised, we call to mind also the more general observation which we have already had occasion to make, that Jesus never exercised the power on His own behalf. He willingly fed thousands of hungry people, once and again, with miraculous bread, but He refused to turn the stones into bread in His own extremity. He could have allowed the Boanerges to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, who refused Him hōspitality, but instead, he journeyed on to another village. His Father would, at His

¹ John ii. 18 ; Matt. xii. 38, xvi. 1 ; John iv. 48.

request, have sent twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from arrest, but He bade Peter put up his hasty sword, and healed Malchus's ear, and gave His hands to be bound. He could have come down from the cross when they challenged Him to do so, as easily as afterwards He rose from the sepulchre, but He bore all till He could say, "It is finished!" and then He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. No, His miraculous power was at the service of every comer, to supply every one's desire, but He never used it on His own behalf; He lived our ordinary life under its ordinary conditions, and used neither His divine attributes nor the supernatural powers entrusted to Him for the work of His ministry so as to make His lot different from ours.

When we gather together the miracles which are related in detail in the Gospels, we find that they are only about forty in number, but we must be careful to give their full meaning to many passages which expressly tell us that very many more were actually wrought.¹ Those which are related have been selected, most of them, as specimens of the ordinary kind of miracles, and the way in which they were wrought, some because of something peculiar and remarkable in the circumstances.

¹ John ii. 23; Matt. viii. 16, and parallel passages; iv. 23, xii. 15, and parallel passages; Luke vi. 19; Matt. xi. 5, xiii. 58, ix. 35, xiv. 14, 36, xv. 30, xix. 2, xxi. 14.

A brief analysis of these will be useful :—

Seventeen are cases of healing,—including fever, leprosy, palsy, the withered arm, the issue of blood, dropsy, blindness, deafness, dumbness, Malchus's ear. John iv. 47; Matt. viii. 2, 14, ix. 2; John v. 5; Matt. xii. 10, viii. 5, ix. 20, 27; Mark viii. 22; John ix. 1; Luke xiii. 10, xvii. 11, xviii. 35, xxii. 51.

Six cases of demoniacal possession,—Mark i. 24, v. 2; Matt. ix. 32; xvii. 15; Luke xi. 14; Matt. xv. 22

Three cases of raising the dead,—the child of Jairus, very lately dead (Matt. ix. 25); the widow's son of Nain, a young man who was being carried to burial (Luke vii. 11); Lazarus, a middle-aged man, who had been dead four days, and was actually in his grave (John xi. 1).

All these may be included in one class as miracles of healing.

A second class may be called miracles of power, and may be divided into—

Three cases of creative power,—the turning of water into wine (John ii. 1), and the two miracles of feeding the multitudes with miraculous bread. (Matt. xiv. 19; Mark viii. 6, and parallel passages).

Three,—the miraculous draughts of fishes (Luke v. 6; John xxi. 6). Peter's finding the shekel in the fish's mouth (Matt. xvii. 27).

Four,—passing unseen through a hostile crowd (Luke iv. 30); twice clearing the Temple of buyers and

sellers, and money-changers (John ii. 13; Matt. xxi. 12); and causing those who came to arrest Him to fall to the ground (John xviii. 6), may be classed together.

Two,—control over the natural powers in stilling the storm (Matt. viii. 26), and walking on the sea (Matt. xiv. 25).

A third great division of the miracles must be made, though it only contains one example.

One miracle of destruction, viz.—the withering of the barren fig-tree (Matt. xxi. 18).¹

Studying the character of these miracles, we see that they are symbolical of the character of the dispensation which they accredit, types in the region of the physical world of the spiritual work which the miracle-worker came to accomplish; to heal souls sick of manifold diseases and infirmities; the dead in trespasses and sins to raise to life again; to calm the disorders with which all nature is distracted through the fall; to ensure by His presence and divine power the safety of the ship of His church over the storms

¹ Contrasting remarkably with the miracles of Moses, among which are fourteen miracles of punishment and destruction:—the ten plagues, the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the defeat of the Amalekites, the fire which destroyed Korah and his company, and the earthquake which swallowed the tents of Dathan and Abiram. Two miracles of power, for evidence:—the serpent and the leprous hand; three miracles of mercy, —the smiting of the rock on two occasions, the brazen serpent.

of this world, and bring us finally to the haven where we would be.

If we place ourselves beside the Lord as He works His miracles, we shall soon observe that He exercises His wonderful power as if the power belonged to Himself, differing in this from all the other workers of miracles in the Scriptures ; for the miracle-workers of the Old Testament spoke of their power as only delegated ; and when Moses forgot himself on one occasion, and spoke as if it was by his own power he would bring water out of the rock, he brought upon himself a signal punishment. The miracle-workers of the New Testament attributed their power to the Name of Jesus.

This, again, accounts for the calmness and absence of effort with which He works ; not as Moses, whose hands must be held up that Israel may prevail against Amalek ; not like Elijah, who stretches himself three times on the body of the widow's child to restore him to life ; He but speaks to the departed soul, and it comes back out of Hades, "Maid, arise!" "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" "Lazarus, come forth!"

We observe the ready and true sympathy with which he enters into the sorrows and sufferings which appeal to Him, the readiness with which He puts His power at the service of every suppliant. We see at last when we have gone up and down with Him every-

where, that He never once refused to work a miracle of healing when asked ; He did refuse to work a miracle of vengeance (Luke ix. 55). Looking at the series of miracles as a whole, we see that the first was an act of creative power, and a type of the marriage-supper of the Lamb ; and the last would have been the one act of destruction, a type of God's judgments impending over the faithless nation and church,—but that He wrought one more, as it were out of due time, when, to repair the too-hasty zeal of His friend, He wrought a last act of miraculous healing, unasked, upon his enemy (Luke xxii. 51).

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CONFESSION OF THE DIVINITY OF THE
CHRIST.

THOUGHTFUL review of our Lord's words will show that He exercised a remarkable reserve in putting before men the doctrine of His own Deity. Its acceptance by man was the essence of man's correspondence with God's plan of salvation.¹ But its acceptance demanded a depth of spiritual insight, which men hardly possessed without some preliminary preparation and training of their moral nature. Accordingly we find that our Lord did not at once openly proclaim and urge this fundamental truth of the Gospel. He presented himself to the knowledge of men, "he dwelt among them," and His works of divine power, His words of divine wisdom, His life of perfect holiness, continually asked the question "What think ye of Christ?"

We seem to trace the growth of the thought in the minds of the disciples. On witnessing some of the earlier miracles "they were astonished"—"amazed" (Luke v. 9; Mark i. 27).

¹ John i. 12; iii. 16, 36; vi. 40, 47.

Some of the miracles brought them into such conscious presence of divine power that "they were afraid," *e.g.*, after the miracle of the stilling of the storm "they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this, for he commandeth even the winds and water and they obey him?" When He had come to them walking on the sea they worshipped Him, and said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God"¹ (Matthew xiv. 33).

We see how the mere wonder deepened into fear; and how fresh manifestations of power made them ask themselves, What manner of man is this? And the inquiry ripened into conjecture that He was more than man, and the awful thought suggested itself to their minds, Was He divine? The thought once suggested would receive confirmation from many recollections of the authority with which He taught, "It was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you"; of the calm authority of self-conscious power with which He said to the winds and waves "Be still," and to the evil spirits "Come out of him," and to the dead "I say unto thee, arise"; of His supernatural knowledge of distant events and men's secret thoughts. The title "Son of God," by which the voice of

¹ The phrase was one of the titles of the Messiah, as we shall presently see, and did not yet in the mouths of the disciples imply a belief in his Deity.

prophecy had designated Him, and by which the voice from heaven at His baptism had spoken of Him, would begin to assume a new and awful significance. A natural fear would withhold them from breaking through the reserve in which Jesus himself veiled the awful truth. They would shrink from admitting to one another vague thoughts which might seem to another blasphemous; perhaps they had not put the thought into definite words, even to their own consciousness. But their minds were ripe for the acceptance of the truth, if presented to them from the outside, and our Lord took measures to bring them to the conclusion.

“He asked them, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, or others Jeremias, or one of the prophets;” perhaps consciously evading the implied application of the question to themselves. Then, with the searching look which reads men’s hearts, and with solemn earnestness of inquiry, He put the question direct to their own souls, “But whom say YE that I am?”

When a solution of a salt has evaporated till it is saturated, a touch which makes the containing vessel vibrate is enough to cause the spiculæ of crystals to dart through the liquid, and crystallisation begins. So our Lord’s solemn question and his searching look seem to have sufficed to crystallise the thought with

which the minds of the apostles were full, into a definite conviction ; and it is wonderfully true to nature that the impulsive Peter should anticipate the rest in the mental process, and, accustomed as he was to speak for the rest, should be the first to give utterance to the tremendous confession, to which the rest by look and gesture assented, THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.

The terms of Our Lord's question, and of Peter's reply, require careful consideration.

Our Lord's question is, "Whom do men say that I, *the Son of Man*, am?" Peter's reply is, "Thou art the Christ, *the Son of God*." The two titles are contrasted with one another.

The title Son of Man was not applied to our Lord by others,¹ but it is the title by which our Lord was accustomed to designate himself. What was its meaning?

It was one of the names given by prophecy to the Messiah. In the vision of Daniel,

"One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him, and his dominion is an everlasting dominion" (Dan. vii. 13).

This kingdom succeeded, in the prophet's vision to

¹ In his lifetime ; it is used by Stephen (Acts vii. 56) ; and by St. John in the Revelation (i. 13 ; xiv. 14).

the four kingdoms foretold by the four typical beasts, and it was understood—rightly—by the Jews to be a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom. Our Lord plainly alluded to Daniel's prophecy in his own prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world: "At that day they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30); and again before Caiaphas, "I say unto you that hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64).

In using the title, then, our Lord was using one of the names appropriated to the Messiah by prophecy, and was openly claiming to be the Messiah.

But why did He specially use this out of the many titles attributed in Scripture to the Messiah? We find the explanation in this, that the title sets forth our Lord's relation to the human race. He was the second Adam, the representative of the human race, *the* Son of Man, THE MAN; the archetypal man, the perfect man. His is the human character and human life which do justice to the idea of humanity. "The fairest among the children of men," the natural prince, leader, and chief of mankind.

It was by this title, then, that Jesus puts his question to the disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And Peter replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

It is true, "Son of God" was, as we have before said, one of the common titles of the Messiah; it had already, in that sense, been given to our Lord by the angel Gabriel, "that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35); by John the Baptist (John i. 34), "I bare record that this is the Son of God"; by Nathanael at the very beginning (John i. 49), and by the disciples a little while before, after the walking on the sea (Matt. xiv. 33). So that Peter's answer did not *necessarily* imply more than that Jesus was the Messiah. But we have already had occasion to note the higher significance of the title, as our Lord uses it when He speaks of God as His Father; and here the context makes it quite clear that it is in this higher sense St. Peter now applies it, otherwise the latter half of St. Peter's reply would be only a tautological repetition of the former half. Our Lord's rejoinder especially, which we must proceed to consider, makes it clear that more than this is meant:—

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 17, 19).

His declaration that this truth had been revealed

to Peter by God ; the blessing pronounced upon him who first gave utterance to it ; the promise that the church should be founded upon it ; all imply that it was a great and hidden truth which had thus been brought to light ; so great that to have had it revealed by God to the soul's consciousness was to have received an honour and a blessing ; so fundamental that it would form the basis of that spiritual kingdom,—that Messianic reign of peace and righteousness,—which Christ had come from heaven to establish on the earth.

The declaration that only by God's special grace could St. Peter's mind have been moved to the reception of this great truth is very remarkable ; it agrees with the words spoken a short time before, when the disciples murmured at his declaration, that he came down from heaven, "No man can come unto me except it were given him of my Father" (John vi. 65). Our Lord's joy that his work had reached this critical stage is very striking.

His Deity recognised by His disciples, His mind at once goes forward to the foundation of His church upon this doctrinal basis ; to the formation of a ministry by which His church should be built ; and looking forward to the end, He prophesies the ultimate triumph of this church and Kingdom, which He lived and died to establish.

The passage which we have thus summarised

requires a little further elucidation, and we commend it to the careful consideration of those who desire really to understand the "mind of Christ," the aims and methods of the Divine Saviour of mankind.

"Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona; and I say unto thee, Thou art Peter [a stone], and upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). Immediately the Lord has brought the Twelve to this spontaneous recognition and open confession of His Deity, His thoughts go forward at once to the subject of the Church, the kingdom of heaven. The Forerunner had proclaimed the advent of the kingdom, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The baptism was the consecration of the King. The gathering of the disciples, and the nomination of the Twelve, was the gathering of subjects and the preparation of administrators. The confession of His Deity by the Twelve was the recognition of the Divine-human nature of the King, the quickening in the souls of the disciples of the germ of the spiritual-temporal kingdom.

The words seem to imply that the King is promising some special honour to him who was the first to make public recognition of his character. The honour

is not that he will build his church on Peter,¹—the church is founded personally on Christ, doctrinally on the dogma of His Deity: it is that He will give to Peter the keys of the Church. Keys are a well-known symbol of office. In the ancient Jewish monarchy the key was a symbol of the office of Minister; Isaiah says of Eliakim, “the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open” (Is. xxii. 22). In the revelation of St. John (iii. 7) our Lord Himself is spoken of as “he who hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth.”

We call to mind that the power of binding and loosing was afterwards conferred upon the rest of the Apostles (Matt. xviii. 18; see also John xx. 23). What was specially given to Peter is in accordance with the facts of the case. All the Apostles tacitly assented to Peter's confession, but he was the first to utter it; so the powers of the ministry are conferred upon all the Twelve, but to Peter was given the honour of making

¹ We content ourselves here with stating that the Fathers agree by a great majority that either Christ Himself, or St. Peter's confession of Christ, is the Rock and Foundation of the Church. Thus Origen, Hilary, Chrysostom, Isidore of Pelusium, Augustine, Cyrel of Alexandria, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Bede, Gregory VII.

the first publication of the Gospel, and admitting three thousand Jewish disciples into the kingdom on the great Pentecost, and also of being the first to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, and admitting the first Gentile disciples, Cornelius and his friends, to the privileges of the kingdom of God.

The Apostles had, by the process which we have sketched, gradually grown up to the recognition of their Lord's Deity, and to its open confession to Him and to one another. But it is remarkable—and yet true to nature—to observe how imperfectly they had yet apprehended it and its necessary consequences; though now they knew Christ, yet still they knew Him only "after the flesh." St. Peter's rebuke, which we have presently to notice, is an illustration of this.

The Apostles having grasped the truth of our Lord's divinity, their minds are ready for the reception of another truth:—

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. xvi. 21).

The contrast between the divine glory just confessed, and the suffering and death thus spoken of, must have filled them with amazement. Instead of laying the saying up in his heart, and pondering it in humble faith, Peter, elated by the commendation lately bestowed upon him, seems to have treated it as

the utterance of an unworthy access of fear and despondency, and he took upon himself to rebuke our Lord, and to encourage him, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." Our Lord's sharp rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" has been thought by commentators to throw a light upon the working of the human mind of Jesus. Every man and every position has its special temptation; that of the Christ, they suggest, was to seek the fulfilment of his designs for the regeneration of mankind by those means which would seem to all men the most direct and obvious, by the use of the supernatural wisdom and the miraculous power which he possessed, and to turn from the passion and the cross, and the slow agency of moral means. This was the chord which Satan struck in the temptation, and this chord was touched now by Peter. Therefore it was that Jesus spoke with the sharpness of one who has been touched on a sensitive nerve, "Get thee behind me, Satan! thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

The thought gives deeper significance to the words which He proceeded to speak. When He had called the people unto Him, with His disciples also, He said unto them,—

"Whosoever will come after me let him deny himself, and ke up his cross, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark viii. 34, 35).

“ For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels ” (Mark viii. 36-38).

“ For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels ; and then he shall reward every man according to his works ” (Matt. xvi. 27).

Not only I, He seems to say, but you must suffer and die. Not in this life, but when I shall return in glory at the last day, then shall you receive your reward, and every one according to his faithful service.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SON OF GOD.

HILE recognising from the very beginning the Divinity of the blessed Lord and Saviour, we have taken great pains to insist upon, and to aid the reader to realise, the true manhood of Jesus. Our unwavering grasp of the truth that He was very God is of such infinite consequence that we think it right to dwell a little upon it here ; not to prove it,—we assume that the reader of such a work as this does not need to have it proved,—but to help him to ponder the fact more leisurely, and to realise it more completely.¹

Christ's claim is to no inferior Deity ; the old Arianism and semi-Arianism are obsolete ; the only real alternatives which present themselves, and indeed the only hypotheses seriously held now, are that He was simply man and nothing more, or that He was very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father.

We may note first that no other historical person

¹ This chapter is much indebted to Canon Liddon's "Bampton Lectures"

has put forth any claim to be more than human,¹ and no other historical person has raised even a suspicion in the minds of men that he was divine.

To one who accepts the Gospels as authentic histories of an historical person, the words of Jesus Himself form a very striking illustration of the subject. It is not for the sake of their evidence, so much as for the sake of putting them before the believer for his meditation, that we call attention to a series of very striking sayings, which show our Lord's self-consciousness on this subject.

No man, of all the sons of men, has had any conscious existence before he was born into this world, but our Lord frequently gives utterance to his consciousness of a pre-existence with God in heaven. He said to the Jews at Capernaum :—

“The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life. He

¹ A claim to remote divine descent is common enough in history. The heroes of Greece, the Scandinavian chiefs, and in modern times certain families among the Sandwich Islanders. The apotheosis of the Roman emperors is only a seeming contradiction to this statement. When the Romans had ceased to believe in their gods, and had come to recognise that some of them were only great men whom the veneration of posterity had numbered among its deities, it was not a very exaggerated compliment to Julius or Augustus to place them also in the company of the few exceptionally great; and only a coarse flattery which paid the same compliment to others who were great only in the accident of their rank.

that eateth of me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . . For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John vi. 33-38).

And to His apostles He said, I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father (John xvi. 28). And to His angry opponents in the Temple He said, "Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad"; and in reply to their obvious objection, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM" (John viii. 58).

No man, of all the sons of men, is without sin; all inherit a sinful nature, and all live faulty lives, and the holier men are the humbler they are, and the deeper sense they have of their sinfulness and their shortcomings. We know something of the humility and the holiness of Jesus, and it is the more significant, therefore, when we find him habitually speaking as one who is conscious of a perfect moral purity. It is not merely in direct assertion such as Satan "cometh and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30), or the challenge to His enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John viii. 46); it is in the assumption of moral perfectness with which He rebukes the hypocrite, or defends the penitent sinner. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" the Jews asked with perfect justice. Yet Jesus habitually

assumes and exercises this divine prerogative: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matthew ix. 2). "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke vii. 47).

He habitually speaks of Himself as having relations towards mankind, and claims upon mankind, such as no mere man can have upon his fellow men. He is "the Light of the world" (John viii. 12), and the life, and source of life, to the soul (John v. 26; vi. 35). He is the one means by which men can come to God: "no man cometh to Father but by me" (John xiv. 6). He hears and answers prayer: "If ye ask anything in my name I will do it" (John xiv. 14). He will raise the dead to life again: "All that are in the graves shall hear my voice" (John v. 28), and He will be the universal judge of mankind (John v. 27, &c.). He claims to share with God the trust, love, and honour of men: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John xiv. 1); "If God were your Father ye would have loved me . . . He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John xv. 23).

In all these places,—and many more might be quoted,—our Lord is not asserting His divinity: He is talking on many and various subjects, and in the course of His utterances He is using words which can only be satisfactorily explained on the theory that He who uses them is more than man.

There are other passages in which He directly claims

to be God, co-equal with the Father. Now, the Jews, —and our Lord, as to his human nature, was a Jew,— were strict monotheists ; they knew nothing of inferior gods, they believed in one God, Creator of all things. All other beings, angel or archangel, cherub or seraph, however exalted, they rightly regarded as created beings, and quite understood that an infinite gulf separates the Creator from all which he has created.

The first passage to be referred to is that already considered in detail, in which the apostles distinctly confess that they have been brought to the conclusion that their Master was “the Son of the living God,” and Jesus accepts the confession, and declares him blessed to whom God has revealed that great truth. On a subsequent occasion, He asserts it to His apostles in language still more direct. In the conversation in the supper-room Philip says, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Jesus turns, and says to him in reply,—

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.”

Judas, on the same occasion, asked why Christ manifested Himself to His disciples, and not to the world. Our Lord replies, that the manifestation of God is made to love,—

“If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him” (John xiv. 23).

Joining Himself with the Father in this divine indwelling in the loving and obedient soul.

We see some reason for the question of Judas in the reserve with which Jesus presented this truth to the faith of men, which has been already discussed.¹ But as time went on He openly expressed the truth in such words that the people perfectly understood the drift of His meaning; and He finally left them without excuse by stating it with unequivocal and startling plainness. When the Jews found fault with Him for healing on the Sabbath-day, and thus breaking the commandment, He defended Himself by saying, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John v. 17), and they rightly saw that the logical inference from His words was that “He made Himself equal with God,” a conclusion which He did not in any way contradict. Again, when the Jews gathered around Him in Solomon’s Porch, at the Feast of the Dedication, said “How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (John x. 24), He points them to His words and works as the evidence of what He was; He declares that those who are His sheep know Him; and speaking of the security of His sheep he goes on to

¹ See page 262.

say, "No one can pluck them out of my hand"; and again, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." They are safe in His own hand, safe in His father's hand; and He reconciles this double statement by saying, "I and my Father are one" (30); "The Father is in me, and I in him" (38), He further explained. Again, the hearers understood Him to claim Deity, and "they took up stones to stone him" for the blasphemy (31). Again, in the disputation with the Pharisees, already alluded to, when He concluded the conversation with the sentence, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM" (John viii. 58), their religious feelings were shocked, outraged, at this assumption to Himself of the sacred name, and they took up stones to stone Him. Lastly, when on His trial before the Sanhedrim, the High Priest stood up, and solemnly adjured Him to declare, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" he solemnly declared, "I am. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," *i.e.*, coming in divine power and glory (Matt. xxvi. 63-4). "Then said they all, Art thou, then, the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am." Well might the High Priest appeal to the Council, and say, "What need we any further witnesses, for we ourselves have heard out of his own mouth" (Luke xxii. 70, 71).

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

HE Transfiguration, in the middle of the public life, the Temptation at its commencement, and the Agony towards its close, contrast strongly with the thorough humanness of the ordinary course of our Lord's life. In these the veil seems to be drawn aside for a moment, and we are allowed glimpses of relations with the unseen world, full of awe and mystery.

The Evangelists¹ connect the Transfiguration with the confession of St. Peter and the subsequent conversation on the Passion, as if the transactions had some relation to one another.

Jesus went up into a high mountain—conjectured to have been one of the peaks of snow-capped Hermon—to pray, and took Peter, James, and John, with him. And as he prayed he was “transfigured,” “the fashion of his countenance was altered,” “his face shone as the sun,” “and his raiment became shining exceeding white as snow,” “white as the light.” We gather

¹ Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark. ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36.

that He appeared in supernatural majesty and splendour ; "majesty" is the very word St. Peter uses in speaking of it many years afterwards,—“we were eye-witnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter i. 16). Comparing these descriptions of the three evangelists with St. John’s description of his vision of the Son of Man (Rev. i. 13–15), we recognise that the Transfiguration was an anticipation of the glory of the ascended Lord.

“And behold, there appeared unto them two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and they were talking with Jesus,” and the subject of the conversation is told us,—“they spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

“And there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud.” St. Peter (2, i. 17) calls the cloud, “the excellent glory”; it was probably the Shekinah, the visible symbol of the presence of God. And there came a Voice out of the Cloud, saying, “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” “And when the disciples heard it they were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes,” “and looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.” “And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until

the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."

It is easy to see that this vision of the glorified Son of Man, and this voice from "the excellent glory," would confirm the disciples in the belief in His Deity which they had recently confessed; and would help in that preparation of their minds for the shock of His Passion and Death, whose first mention had called forth Peter's "rebuke," and which still they could not understand, "questioning with one another what the rising from the dead should mean."

But the transaction needs a profounder exposition. It was not a mere vision, a pageant intended only for the edification of the three apostles; it was a real transaction in the development of the life and work of the Saviour; and the three apostles were permitted to witness it, as the same three were afterwards allowed to be witnesses of the Agony.

Moses and Elias were talking with Jesus. It at once comes to mind that Elijah was translated without dying: had this anything to do with his appearance to our Lord? But Moses died a natural death; true, there was something unusual in the circumstances of it, but we are expressly told, twice over,¹

¹ Deut. xxxiv. 5; Joshua i. 1.

that he died. And though "Enoch was not, for God took him," and Elijah was translated without dying, we are not to conclude hastily that their bodies underwent the change into glorified bodies: this would be to anticipate the resurrection of Christ, the first-fruits from the dead; and we are not to conclude that their souls, though by a special grace released from the body without the mortal dread and pang, went to any other place than that where the souls of other saints of God await, in peace and happiness, the consummation of their bliss and glory at the last great day. The true answer to the natural question, Whence did Moses and Elias come? is, probably, From the place of the blessed departed.

What was the object of their appearance to Jesus? "They spake with him of his decease [his "exodus" is the word in the original] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They did not announce it to Him, for He knew it long before, when He said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again"; He knew the mode of it when He said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"; He had, a week before, announced to his disciples in the plainest and fullest terms that He "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Instead of being sent to make some communication

to Jesus on the subject, were they rather sent to Him to receive some communication from Him? The transaction, we have said, is connected by the Evangelists with the confession of His Deity, are the relations between the two to be sought in the transaction itself, not merely in the admission of the three disciples to witness it? Was the "transfiguration" a manifestation of the glory of the Son of Man to Moses and Elias, as well as to the apostles? Was the recognition of the Deity by the apostles such a critical point in the development of the work of the Saviour, that its results reached into the unseen world, and extended to the saints under the altar, who cry, "How long?"

When, "suddenly, the disciples looked round about and saw no man any more," whither had Moses and Elias departed? Surely back to the place of the blessed departed, from which they had come to this mysterious interview. Our Lord shortly afterwards Himself "descended into Hades," and "preached to the spirits in prison." Is it possible that the great Lawgiver and the great Prophet, on their return from this interview on Hermon, announced the actual appearance on earth of the long-promised Deliverer, and heralded to the hundred generations of expectant souls in Hades, as John did to the living generation, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand?

We are led on by such like considerations to the general question of the relations of Jesus to the unseen world. We, too, are surrounded by the beings of the unseen world, and they are unseen actors in the drama of our lives. It is consistent with our notions of Jesus that He should be conscious of these superhuman agencies; and glimpses of His relations with them are occasionally given us. The angels seem to be continually hovering about His path, and He is conscious of their attendance, "I could pray to my Father, and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels"; their presence is made visible to us at the Nativity, when they sang their anthem of rejoicing; at the Temptation, ministering to Him; in the Garden, strengthening Him; at the tomb, attending upon His Resurrection; and again, at His Ascension. He has relations with the evil spirits in the Temptation, and in His delivery of the possessed from the spirits, "who knew him who he was, the Holy One of God."

He has relations with the departed spirits of men, as when He said to the departed spirit of Jairus's daughter, "Maid, arise!" and of the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" and of Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth!" and when He talked with Moses and Elias on the mount; and when He "preached to the spirits in prison."

He has relations with the powers of Nature, as

when "he said to the winds and the sea, Peace, be still! and immediately there was a great calm."

His relations as Son of Man with God we speak of with reverence, but we clearly have indications of them in His frequent prayers,¹ notably in His prayer before the raising of Lazarus,—“Father, I know that thou hearest me always,” and in the prayer in the garden, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me; yet not my will, but thine be done”; and on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!” In the great eucharistic prayer, in John xvii., there are words which seem to be those of the Son of Man, “I am no more in the world . . . but I come to thee.” “For their sakes I sanctify myself.” There are others which can only come from the Son of God: “And now, O Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

¹ Matt. xiv. 23; Luke vi. 12, ix. 28; Mark i. 35.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE JUDÆAN MINISTRY.

N coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration they found that a man had brought his lunatic son to be healed, and during the absence of their master, the nine apostles had tried and failed to heal him,—a failure which drew forth the public rebuke, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?” and which he afterwards attributed to their own deficiency in faith arising from want of due use of the means of grace, “this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” The incident supplies us also with the fact that a sincere though feeble and wavering faith is not rejected by the merciful Lord: “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief;” and “Jesus healed the child and delivered him to his father” (Mark ix. 14-27; Luke ix. 37-42).

As they journeyed back to Capernaum, Jesus again spoke to them of his Passion: “Let this saying sink down into your ears; the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed he shall rise again the third day

And they were exceeding sorry ; but they understood not the saying and were afraid to ask him " (Matthew xvii. 22, 23 ; Mark ix. 31, 32 ; Luke ix. 44, 45).

But the apostles seem to have inferred that a crisis was at hand, and the old ambitious disputes broke out again as to " who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And He took a child and set him in the midst, and said, " Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" ; and when He had taken him in His arms He said, " Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me ; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me " (Matthew xviii. 1-5 ; Mark ix. 33-37 ; Luke ix. 46-48). To this period belongs the discourse on offences ;¹ on forgiveness, with the parable of the unmerciful debtor.²

The Feast of Tabernacles approaching, our Lord went up to it by the direct road through Samaria, sending the seventy disciples before Him into every place where He himself should come, to proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand. On this journey He healed the ten lepers. He arrived at Jerusalem about the middle of the Feast. There was great difference of opinion about Him among the assembled pilgrims : " Some said, He is a good man ; others, Nay, but He

Matt. xviii. 6 ; Mark ix. 42. ² Matt. xviii. 15.

deceiveth the people." The Pharisees sent officers to arrest Him, but they returned overawed by what they had heard, saying "Never man spake like this man."

The discourses, "I am the light of the world," "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," and "I am the good Shepherd," recorded in John vii. 11-53; viii. 12-59; x. 1-21, took place at this feast; and the incident of the woman taken in adultery (John viii. 1-11), and the healing of the man who was born blind. The latter miracle, being wrought on the Sabbath day, confirmed some of the Pharisees in their conclusion that "this man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day"; while others persisted in the obvious argument, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" and there was a division among them.

It is on this visit to Jerusalem that we hear first of our Lord's friendship with the family of Bethany, and it is probable that the teachings and discourses in Luke xi., xii., xiii., may be inserted in this place.

He did not afterwards return to Galilee, but spent the time between this Feast and the last Passover in the villages of the Jordan valley and its boundary hills. In the middle of the period occurs the Feast of the Dedication, to which our Lord paid a visit which is briefly recorded by St. John (x. 22-42), and from which it almost appears as if he had to escape from his enemies by a hasty flight.

Many of our Lord's parables belong to this later

period of His public life: The Great Supper, the Lost Sheep, the Piece of Silver, the Prodigal Son, the Unjust Steward, the Rich man and Lazarus.

The sickness of Lazarus led Him to incur again the danger of a visit to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in spite of the remonstrances of His disciples, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" When He persisted, "Thomas said unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

It is not within our plan to give the beautiful history of the raising of Lazarus in detail; we can only indicate how it illustrates the true humanity of the Lord in His friendship for the family of Bethany, in the keen sensitiveness of His sympathy with the sorrows of others, which made Him weep with the weeping sisters and friends, although He had delayed His visit in order that this grief might come upon them; and although He knew that He was going so shortly to turn their tears into joy. It is an assurance full of comfort that the blessed Lord does not, as we might have thought, regard our human sorrows with the smile of half contemptuous pity which we bestow on the griefs of children, but keenly feels our present grief, and sorrows with us.

We have also to point out the fact that the performance of this miracle so near to Jerusalem, and immediately reported to the Pharisees, ripened

the growing resolution of the leaders of the nation to compass His destruction. "Some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. Then Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not,"—the common fallacy of mere worldly policy, to think a small injustice lawful which may avert the risk of a great evil. "Then from that day forth they took counsel to put Him to death."

St. John makes upon this utterance the very remarkable note: "And this spake he, not of himself, but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Jesus, therefore, hearing of their designs, "walked no more openly among the Jews," but again withdrew "unto a country near to the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim" (John xi. 54), which is conjectured to have been to the north-east of Jerusalem,

on the eastern side of the hills overlooking the Jordan valley.

At length the time approached for the Passover Feast, and Jesus steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem.

He knew that it was His last journey thither. The Apostles knew the great danger He incurred, and they with Him, in putting Himself into the power of the Jewish rulers. We are not to suppose, with His enemies, that Christ's career was cut short and His life left incomplete. He had evaded His enemies for a time; it was only when the time had come that all should be accomplished that He went up to Jerusalem and surrendered Himself to their power.

The world is amazed at the heroism of Regulus, who returned to Carthage to certain torture and death. Jesus showed equal heroism when now He "set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem," knowing all which should befall Him there.

And let us not fail to recognise the heroism of Thomas and the rest of the Apostles, who also took their lives in their hands, content to "go and die with Him." Perhaps we do not always do justice to the Apostles. Their slowness of belief and dulness of apprehension seem amazing to us who know all the glorious sequel of the history which was then only in its obscure beginnings. We are disposed to despise them for the faults and failures, which we

know only by their frank confession of them ; for it is they who tell us of the ambition of James and John, the denial of Peter, the drowsiness of the watchers at Gethsemane, and the panic and flight of them all. To those who looked on from the outside, their character and conduct might wear another and nobler aspect. They were the first who had spiritual insight enough to believe in Him in His obscure beginning ; their faith was so strong that they left all to be His followers ; they were entirely faithful for three years, while other disciples were offended and forsook Him, and men generally wondered and vacillated ; they clung to Him with a strange tenacity even when a death of shame seemed to have extinguished all their hopes. This is what men saw of them and admired. We know how, subsequently, they comprehended the plan of their Lord, and, cheerfully resigning all their hopes of temporal greatness, spent their lives in poverty and hardship, toil and danger, in carrying out His plan ; and ultimately sealed their faith in Him, and ended their work for Him, with a martyr's death.

“ And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them ” (Matt. xx. 17) ; *“ Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished ”* (Luke xviii. 31) ; *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 " (Mark x. 33, 34).

This is the third plain prediction of His sufferings. The first He gave immediately upon Peter's confession of His divinity,¹ the second a little while after,² and now again with still more minute particularity. But St. Luke adds, "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken," which is not to be carelessly taken as tautological. "They understood none of these things"; they, like the rest of their countrymen, were entirely prepossessed with the idea of a temporal Jewish monarchy and a Messiah who should revive the glories of a Solomon on the larger scale which the ampler stage of the then civilised world afforded. The idea of shame, and suffering, and death, and rising again, belonged to a totally different order of things. They had totally failed to grasp the idea of a suffering Messiah, and the ideas involved in it, viz., that by utter obedience He would attain universal dominion ; that infinite humility was the condition of infinite glory, and death at the hands of His enemies was the stroke of victory and the entrance to eternal life.

¹ Matt. xvi. 21 ; Mark viii. 31 ; Luke ix. 22.

² Matt. xvii. 22 ; Mark ix. 31 ; Luke ix. 44.

Therefore "this saying was hid from them"; they took it, probably, to be a profound, mysterious saying of the same kind as that which spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as the heavenly nourishment which should make men live for ever. And so "they did not know that the things which were spoken" were plain truths, to be fulfilled in a few days with such literal fidelity.

Yet they saw that a crisis was at hand. They conjectured that the time of preparation was drawing to a close, and that the kingdom which had so long been kept prominently before their minds was about to be established; and the old rivalries, and ambitions, and jealousies broke out again among them. Salome, "the mother of Zebedee's children," viz., James and John, presuming upon the fact that they two, with Peter, had so often¹ been selected by the Lord out of the rest for special privilege, and that John was honoured with his special affection, came with James and John, and asked that when He entered upon His kingdom, these two might "sit on His right hand and on His left," *i.e.*, occupy the highest places "in His kingdom."

They travelled by the great road along the Jordan valley and through Jericho, now, by the care of the Herod family, a fine Grecized city, with its royal

¹ *E.g.*, to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter, and above all to be present at the Transfiguration; and subsequently to be watchers with Him in Gethsemane.

palace, and hippodrome, and aqueducts, the centre of a luxuriously fertile and well-cultivated district, watered by the abundant springs of Jericho. As He entered into Jericho occurred the healing of blind Bartimæus and his companion ; and as He departed, He called Zaccheus, the chief of the Publicans of the city, and dined with him, probably at his country house in the suburb of the city ; when Zaccheus gave the church his great example of restitution as an accompaniment of true repentance.

And as they journeyed on towards Jerusalem, and the expectation which had caused the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee gathered strength in the minds of the disciples, He spake the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return, intimating that what awaited them was to be put in offices of labour and responsibility, and that for their reward they would have to wait till the Lord's second coming. "And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem."

But, as we have seen (p. 223), the vast numbers who came up to the great feasts could not all find accommodation within the city ; some lodged in the neighbouring villages, some camped round about. Our Lord, on this occasion, took up His abode for the festival time at Bethany, at the house of Lazarus.

Here, on the Sabbath, at an entertainment in honour of Jesus, in the house of Simon the leper,

Lazarus was one of them that sat at table, Martha served, Mary anointed Him with the ointment whose odour filled not only all the house, but has filled all the Church of Christ, and Judas and others murmured, and Jesus defended the act of costly devotion.

St. John gives us a glimpse of the state of feeling which surrounded Jesus as the crisis approached. Among His disciples we have seen was an eager expectation that the kingdom of God was about immediately to appear. The public mind was occupied with Him, and there was a general expectation that something was about to happen. The people who came out of the country to the feast, as they stood in the Temple, talked about Him to one another, and conjectured whether He would venture to come to the feast (John xi. 56). What made them question it was that "both the Chief Priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him" (John xi. 56, 57). Many, hearing that He was staying in Bethany, went out there to see Him, and not only Him, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. And "the Chief Priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus (John xii. 9-12).

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

INCE our limited space compels us to pass by many of our Lord's words, it may be useful to make a few observations suggested by a general survey of them.

First as to the occasion of His utterances. He did not, like the Greek philosophers or Jewish rabbis of His day, establish a school to which His disciples came to hear His teaching. He was always teaching, everywhere. True, it was His custom on the Sabbath, when He attended the Synagogue, to take the office of expounding the Scripture lesson; and several of His discourses were delivered in the Temple to the people assembled at the feasts; but these are only instances of His custom of teaching everywhere, in the public streets, in the house, by the sea-shore, at dinner, on the mountain-side, in the boat, in the Synagogue, and in the Temple. Like the sun, which shines always, everywhere, so the Light of the world sheds forth spiritual light continually, and in lavish abundance.

We all know how much words gain in effect by the manner in which they are spoken. The same

words which in one man's mouth seem tame, strike nobody, win nobody, are by another spoken with a fire which thrills the soul, or a winning grace which irresistibly attracts. Our Lord's mode of delivery seems to have been ordinarily calm, as His whole temperament was not emotional; but St. Mark not unfrequently notes that He "looked on" a person whom He addressed, or "looked round about on" those who surrounded Him, as if there was something very noteworthy in the effect of His glance. And there are several notes in the Gospels of the general effect of His words upon those who heard Him. When He spoke in the Synagogue at Nazareth, "all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke iv. 22). When the Sanhedrim sent officers to take Him, they, standing awhile on the outskirts of the crowd, heard Him speak, and were so disarmed of prejudice and won by His words and manner, that they returned without attempting to touch Him, saying, "Never man spake like this man."

In studying the form of His utterances, we may divide them into set discourses, conversations, parables, proverbial sayings.

When we speak of set discourses,—such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Ordination charge to the Apostles and the Seventy, and the Eucharistic Discourses,—there is no evidence that they were studied

orations: probably they flowed freely and spontaneously out of the fulness of His mind; for His familiar conversations tend to run into lengthy monologues, which are exactly of the same style as the set discourses, as in the conversation with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman, at the grave of Lazarus.

His "style" is remarkable for simplicity, and even homeliness; its most striking feature is its calm, familiar common sense. Even in eloquent passages, it is not the eloquence of florid phraseology and rhetorical skill, but that of the grandeur of the thought and the clear direct force with which the thought is expressed, or the depth of the feeling and the "touch of nature" with which He makes other hearts thrill in unison with His own.

But His teachings were conveyed most frequently in familiar conversations, arising naturally out of the circumstances of the moment, taking their happy illustrations from objects then under the eyes or in the thoughts of the hearers; sometimes following easily the devious channels suggested by answers or remarks, sometimes putting these aside as irrelevant, and pursuing His own train of thought. One remarkable characteristic of His answers to questions is the way in which He seems to look into the questioner's mind, and put aside his verbal query and answer the thought which is in his heart; a

similar characteristic is the way in which He answers a question by another question which throws the querist back upon himself, and makes him think out the subject for himself, or turns him from the subject he has proposed to another of more vital consequence ; another is the way in which He concludes and sums up a whole discourse by a parable.

The abundant use of parables is a very remarkable characteristic of our Lord's teaching.

His utterances seemed remarkable to his contemporaries in this, that they were not disquisitions on a text, like the discourses of the rabbis, or like modern sermons ; they were not inquiries into truth, like the discussions of the philosophers ; " He taught as one having authority," *i.e.* not as one who had learned from others, or gathered from books, or otherwise possessed only a borrowed and partial knowledge, but as one who possessed, of himself, a full cognizance of all the truth of the matters upon which He speaks, and whose utterance is to be accepted as conclusive.

When we turn to the substance of our Lord's teaching, an objection has been brought against Christ in this respect, which it is worth while to mention, because it puts in a striking point of view what the general subject matter of His teaching was. It has been objected that whereas Christ is said to have had supernatural wisdom, and to have desired

to use that wisdom for the welfare of mankind, He never made any disclosure of the secrets of nature, which would help men in the progress of civilisation ; He did not point out one overlooked substance, or one property of matter, or one application of natural laws which would add to the convenience of life : He is said to have performed many wonderful cures, but He did not point out one medicine which could permanently assist in the cure of disease, or the mitigation of pain, or the prolongation of life. In other words, He did not anticipate the discovery of electricity, or of the steam-engine, or of quinine or anæsthetics.

The observation is quite true and striking, and valuable, in that it puts clearly before us what was not and what was the subject matter of Christ's teaching. It brings out forcibly the truth that the special revelation which Christ made to mankind was outside the sphere of physical science ; it was in that sphere of moral and spiritual truth which lies above that of physical science.

St. Paul says (2 Tim. i. 10), " Our Saviour Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel " : that was the subject matter of His teaching. What, after all, is the knowledge which man wanted, then, and always ? We look at the wonderful universe about us, and study it. We look at ourselves and our fellow men, and study their lives. We see how

men spend a few short years of suffering, and sorrow, and disappointment here, and die, and are seen no more. We cannot accept this as the natural and necessary, and satisfactory condition of human life. We find powers within us which seem to have no adequate sphere of action in our life ; we feel capacities for happiness which are only disappointed ; we feel a deep capacity for life, and knowledge, and achievement which seems to be prematurely extinguished by death. We have a profound conviction that something is wrong, that everything is wrong ; the universe a terrible mystery, and life a dreadful dream.

What, then, is the knowledge of which man needs the revelation ? It is not the knowledge of animalculæ and fossils ; it is not the invention of steam-engine and telegraph, and the discovery of specifics and anæsthetics,—all good enough in their way ; he will discover them all in good time. The knowledge man wants by Divine revelation, because it is beyond the range of human science or human philosophy to discover, is this:—What does the universe mean ? What am I ? Whence came I ? What is the use of life ? Is there anything after this life ? Is there a God ? What is He ? What are my relations to Him ?

And this is the knowledge which Christ gave to man. Taking the word “philosophy” to mean an explanation of the universe and of human life, Christ

was the greatest of philosophers. Look through His teachings. He tells us the 'profounder truths of the Godhead; the Trinity of Persons; the union of God and man in Christ; the gift of the Spirit to man. The reconciliation of God and man through Christ; the regeneration of human nature by the Spirit; the last judgment; life everlasting, and the second death.

No, Christ did not reveal science to man, He revealed God to man; He did not bestow specifics and anæsthetics, but He gave him Divine grace; He did not teach new systems of astronomy, but He gave man the principles of a wise and holy life. He knew that it was not political revolutions, or applications of science to the arts of life, which were needed to ameliorate the condition of mankind; all the scientific discoveries that could be made would not do so much for the amelioration of the conditions of human life as the revelation of the Ten Commandments; the things which were really needed to be known, those He revealed; the new powers which men really needed, those He gave; and He organised an institution by means of which this revelation and this grace should be spread and perpetuated to the end of time.

The great revelation of all which Christ made to the world was Himself, God manifested Himself in Christ. Christ showed us in Himself a perfect man

and a perfect human life. This was the great subject matter of His revelation, not merely this truth and that truth, which are scattered throughout His words, but His own person, character, and life. This is the master clue which at once gives unity to the words of Jesus.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE.”



ON the following morning, Jesus set out from Bethany to go to Jerusalem. His apostles accompanied Him, and a great number of the pilgrims who came up with Him by the high road from Jericho, after their Sabbath halt at Bethany, naturally resumed their journey with Him at daybreak next day.

When they approached the little village of Bethphage, Jesus sent two of His disciples, saying:—¹

“Go into the village over against you, and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her whereon never man sat: loose them and bring them unto me. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of them.”

This is the only place in which He styles Himself “the Lord.” “This was done,” says St. Matthew, —according to His wont, pointing out the correspondence of our Lord’s acts with the ancient prophecies—“This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,² saying, ‘Tell ye

¹ Matt. xxi. 1-3; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-34; John xii. 12-19.

² Zech. ix. 9.

the daughter of Sion : behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.' And the two disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded." And the other Apostles, and the rest of the people, understood the Lord's intention. The Apostles were anxiously expecting the proclamation of the Kingdom. The people who had come up with Him seem to have shared their expectation, and when Jesus now gave His permission, they enthusiastically embraced the permission to treat Him as a King.

The usual dress of the time and country was the tunic and pallium, the pallium being a large, plain, unshaped piece of woollen cloth, not unlike a Scotch plaid. With some of these they made extempore caparisons for the beasts, "they put on them their clothes," and Jesus mounted the colt; the ass, perhaps, went before, like the caparisoned horses which are still, in the East, led before a person whom it is desired to honour.

It must be borne in mind that the ass of the East is a larger and finer animal than our English ass, and has not our ideas of meanness and poverty attached to its use. It was and is commonly used by persons of condition. "Ye that ride on white asses" was addressed to rulers and judges. The horse was indeed the nobler animal, but was usually reserved for war, while the ass and mule were used

for peaceful travel. Pilate came up to the Feast from Cæsarea-by-the-Sea, surrounded by a military staff, at the head of an army ; Herod rode southward from Sepphoris along the mountain-tops, surrounded by courtiers and attended by his guard ; Jesus approaches over the Mount of Olives, riding an ass's colt, and is surrounded by a few disciples on foot ; but we must not let the lowliness of the accessories veil the significance of the fact that our Lord on this occasion assumed the insignia of royalty. The multitude took off their upper garments and spread them before Him on the path, so as to make a continuous carpet for the King to ride over ; they cut down branches from the wayside trees, and strewed their foliage under His feet ; they filled the air with acclamations :—

“ Hosannah to the Son of David ! Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord ! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David ! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest ! ”

St. Luke has recorded a touching incident of His progress, omitted by the other Evangelists. As the road from Bethany winds round the slope of Olivet, it rises over a little shoulder of the hill, and suddenly reveals the view of the city on the opposite hill, its mighty walls and towers, its palaces and streets, its groves and gardens, the Temple, with its marble walls, its long colonnades, its lofty gates, its gilded roofs, that striking combination of massive strength, and

architectural splendour, and lavish magnificence, which made this view of Jerusalem from the east one of the most impressive sights in the world.

What fresh acclamations would burst forth as the multitudes came in sight of the royal city, to which they were at length, after so many ages of expectation, conducting the King who should there at once commence His glorious reign. And the Lord paused to gaze, but the sight which filled them with admiration and triumph filled Him with sadness. His prophetic mind knew that the throne to which He was being conducted in triumph was the Cross ; that Jerusalem, rejecting the kingdom He was about to set up, would perish in consequence ; that this very hour of His coming to it was the crisis of its fate. He foresaw the strong city and the magnificent temple ruined and laid waste ; and while the multitude shouted, "Hosannah," He sadly gazed and wept.

"He wept over it, and said, 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. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side ; 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."

And He journeyed on. And many in Jerusalem, hearing that He was coming, took branches of palm-trees in their hands, and went forth to meet Him ;

and "the multitude that went before and that followed after" conducted Him thus in triumph into the city. But some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, "Master, rebuke thy disciples!" And He answered and said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke xix. 39). So important, so momentous, was the event, that if men had failed to recognise it, some supernatural manifestation would have illustrated it, even as the darkened sun His passion, an earthquake His death, an earthquake His rising again.

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. xxi. 10-11).

"And when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve" (Mark xi. 11).

The full meaning of this transaction needs careful consideration: the more so that its importance is in these days very commonly undervalued. We note, first, that it was brought about, like His baptism, by His own direct initiative. Unless He had suggested it, this royal entry into Jerusalem would not have taken place. Its meaning clearly is that it was the deliberate and open assumption on the part of our Lord of a royal character. The royal pomp was a very humble one, compared with a Roman triumph, or even with the entry of an Eastern king

into his capital. No magnificent chariot or tall war-horse, no crown and royal robes, no surrounding splendour of attendant nobles, no guard of prancing horsemen or display of the power of an army. "Thy King cometh unto thee, meek, sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." But the fact remains beyond question, that now, at length, our Lord assumed the royal character, and entered into Jerusalem at the great Feast of the Passover, in a royal procession, amidst the acclamations of His adherents and of the multitudes who hailed Him as the long looked-for King of the House of David, inaugurating the Kingdom of David, in the name of the Lord.

This is a part of our Lord's official character which lies rather in the back-ground of the popular realisation of THE CHRIST. The popular religious mind sees Jesus clearly, and accepts His work, as the Sacrifice for its sins ; values the prevalence of His intercession as the High Priest ; but does not adequately realise His royalty as King of the kingdom of God, and its relations to Him in this character.

From a very early period, and throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, this day used to be marked, and its significance brought out, in the picturesque symbolical manner of those times, by a procession of the Christian congregation, carrying palms, or such substitute for palms as the climate

of the country and the season of the year afforded. We, after our more prosaic fashion, still celebrate the birthday of Christ; we observe His death day; His resurrection day is our greatest festival; and the observance of His ascension day is fast reviving. We have a special service in our Prayer Book for the accession day of our temporal sovereign (whom may God long preserve in health and prosperity;) but the accession day of our Heavenly King goes without its due observance.

Perhaps the failure of many to appreciate the Kingship of Christ may arise partly out of a misunderstanding of some phases of the Gospel history. When the people would have taken Jesus by force and made Him a king,¹ He would not allow it; and this may leave on the minds of superficial readers an impression that He altogether refused the kingly office. But this is not so. He refused to take up His kingship on their initiative, at their time, in their way, and the kind of kingship which they meant. But it was a part of the will and counsel of God from the beginning that He should be a king. It was as important that He should be king as that He should be sacrifice and priest. Accordingly, when His time was come, and in His own way, He did openly assume the kingly dignity, He did actually become a king. It was for

¹ John vi. 15.

this He died. This was the accusation which the Jews brought against Him before Pilate. When Pilate asked Him, "Art thou a king, then?" he acknowledged it. This was the crime for which He was finally condemned, as was declared by the certificate of His accusation affixed to the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." And it was this open assumption of royalty on Palm Sunday which formed the ground of the accusation which He never attempted to deny.

If we picture Jesus to ourselves as He appeared to the people, we shall see that they had good cause for their enthusiastic reception of Him. This young man of three-and-thirty, though brought up in obscurity, was the lineal heir of David; He had a dignified and gracious presence,¹ winning manners, great purity and elevation of character, a profound, yet practical wisdom, an eloquence which won adherents and astonished and disarmed opponents; He might well seem worthy to revive the kingdom of David and of Solomon. Besides His great natural gifts, He was endowed with supernatural powers of the most extraordinary kind. He seemed to exercise authority, at His own pleasure, over sickness and health, over the winds and waves, over life and death, over the powers and beings of the unseen world. These supernatural

¹ See page 208.

endowments seemed to be God's testimony to the truth of His claim to be the Messiah.

We know that He had still higher endowments, which the Jews were ignorant of; He was not only Son of David, but Son of Man; not only the fulfilment of Israel's ideal, but the fulfilment of the world's ideal. He from whom mankind, dead in Adam, received a new life; Himself, like Adam, a perfect man, possessing all the qualities of human nature, in their highest perfection and in balanced harmony. Not only the heir of David's throne, but the natural head and king of mankind.

For what is the ideal of a king, which, the more nearly they approach it, kings are really kings? Is it not the lineal representative of the great ancestor to whom the race looks back as the founder of its national existence; the Father of the People, who in person, mind, and character is the embodiment of the great qualities of his race; who goes forth in war as the champion of his people against their foe, and offers his life in single combat for them, and by his victory delivers them from their enemy; whose great heart embraces all his people in its love; whose sagacious mind continually studies their well-being; whose days are spent in their service; whose reward is their appreciation and their love; and who, if this be denied, can still patiently bear and magnanimously forgive; still

toil and sacrifice self for the public good, content with the welfare of his people for his reward?

Jesus fulfilled this ideal of a king of men, and more, for Jesus had that unique and transcendent claim, that He was not only man, but God. He made the world, He made man, He became incarnate that, as man, He might rule His own world, and, because He ever liveth, His is an everlasting sovereignty.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THIS may be the most appropriate place for considering with greater completeness the subject which we have had to allude to so frequently throughout the former pages of the Life of Christ, the subject of the Kingdom of the Christ.

Many of the prophecies of the ancient Scriptures—a profounder study will reveal that the ancient Scriptures as a whole—speak of a future king and a future kingdom. They ascribe to this king attributes which seem sometimes to be more than human, and they describe this kingdom in language which seems to recall Paradise or to anticipate Heaven.

We will only refer here to a few of the more obvious of these predictions, and it will be enough in many cases to call them to mind by a salient sentence.

The 132nd Psalm defines that this king shall be of the posterity of David.

“The Lord hath made a faithful oath unto David, and He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy seat.”

The 89th Psalm says, in the same strain,—

“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn

unto David my servant : Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. . . .

“ I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.”

Of the universality of the dominion of the Son of David, the 110th Psalm says,—

“ The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

And the 2nd Psalm,—

“ Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? . . . Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession,” &c.

Of the nature of His reign, the 72nd Psalm speaks :

“ Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. . . . In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.”

Then it goes on to speak of the universality of His dominion and of the willing allegiance of the kings of the earth :—

“ The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him.”

Of the continuance of His kingdom, it says,—

“His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.”

Isaiah is full of descriptions of the peace, righteousness, and blessedness of this future kingdom.

“With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, . . . and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is. xi.).

“It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is. ii.).

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. . . . And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with

songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Is. xxxv.).

These and many like prophecies seemed to say plainly that the days would come when a Son of David would establish in Jerusalem a world-wide monarchy, that the kings of the earth would pay Him a willing obedience, and that those who refused, He would conquer with the sword ; that the nations would believe in God, and that Jerusalem would become the centre of the world's worship, as well as the seat of universal empire. They seemed to say that this King, by wise laws and a just administration, would introduce an era of justice, virtue, prosperity, and happiness, and raise mankind to the highest point of well-being. In short, that the kingdom of Messiah would realise that ideal of the primæval golden age of the world which man has never forgotten, and whose restoration has been the aspiration and hope of the noblest souls through all the sinful, sorrowful centuries of the world's history. It was a noble ideal. It was true in its broad general outlines. The great error of the Jews was as to the means by which it was to be brought about, and the place they were to take in it.

If the previous predictions, with their figurative language, seem to leave the king and the kingdom somewhat like a beautiful vision, which might be

amply fulfilled by reference to the future happiness of the blessed in Heaven, there were other prophecies which seemed, with prosaic plainness, to place the kingdom among the kingdoms of this world, and to define with perfect precision the time of its establishment.

Nebuchadnezzar's vision, and Daniel's interpretation of it:—Nebuchadnezzar saw in his vision a great image, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, feet part of iron and part of clay. He saw a stone, cut out without hands, which smote¹ the image upon his feet, and brake them in pieces like chaff of the summer thrashing-floor, and the wind carried them away. But the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

In this vision, Daniel declared, God made known to the king what should be in the latter days. To this mightiest king of the first great empire God vouchsafed a revelation of the future course of empire, an outline of the future history of the world. "Thou, O king!" said the Prophet, "art a king of kings, for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, He hath made thee ruler over them all: Thou art this head

¹ The force of the original is "smote repeatedly."

of gold ; and after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass ; and a fourth kingdom strong as iron and this kingdom shall be divided. And afterwards shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and it shall last for ever." A subsequent vision, of the Four Beasts, which God sent to the Prophet himself, confirmed this vision of the king.

The Jews knew how the vision of Nebuchadnezzar had been verified in the course of six centuries of history ; how the Babylonian empire had given place to the wider Asiatic dominion of Persia ; how the Greek conquests had united Asia and Egypt with Greece ; how the Romans had succeeded to Greece, and added the west to the east and south in the greatest empire the world had seen. The Jews gathered from Daniel's interpretation of the vision that the Roman empire would give place to a Jewish empire, which would spread over all the world, and last to the end of time. Finally, Gabriel had brought to Daniel a message, which seemed to define the time when the last empire should be established :—

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince

shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks," &c. (Dan. ix. 24, 25).

The Jews understood the prophetic weeks to be weeks of years, each day a year, and $70 \times 7 = 490$ years, $69 \times 7 = 483$ years. That period had elapsed since the decree which went forth to rebuild Jerusalem, and the Jews were naturally in a condition of intense suppressed excitement, expecting some sudden and great deliverance; and throughout the world there was a vague expectation of the coming of some remarkable person, and of some crisis in the world's history. It was in the midst of this excited state of feeling that the herald voice of John the Baptist fell:—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord: the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But the nature of the kingdom which Jesus inaugurated disappointed the expectations of the Jews. It was, in fact, a totally new idea among men. An empire stretching over all continents, embracing all peoples, without necessarily disturbing the existing political arrangements of the world, not dethroning a single king or altering the constitution of a single commonwealth.

Christ demanded the entire allegiance of every human being, but He would accept only voluntary adherents. He promulgated not so much laws to regulate the outward conduct, as principles to control the motives of action. He did not propose to enforce

obedience by any temporal penalties; the ultimate and capital punishment (in this world) of the gravest offender, was simple exclusion from the number of His people. Of the worldly possessions of His subjects, He claimed everything as His own, and left them to contribute what they would.

Just because this Sovereignty was so vague and spiritual, therefore it was so absolute and universal. It could not be satisfied with external deference to certain definite injunctions and restrictions. It claimed to reign in the reason, affections, conscience, will of men; it demanded that every man should yield himself up entirely in his internal life of belief, and motive, and aim, and therefore, as an inevitable consequence, in his external life of action, to fulfil every word and every wish of the Christ with a willing, entire, and enthusiastic obedience. To minds filled with ideas of conquest, political ascendancy, and temporal power and grandeur, the "kingdom not of this world," the spiritual kingdom of which He spoke, seemed an unreal mockery of sovereignty; it excited the pity of Pilate, the scorn of Herod, the rejection of the Jews!

Profounder spirits will recognise that what Christ claimed was really a Sovereignty so absolute, and universal, and searching, that nothing short of the possession by the Sovereign of perfect wisdom, perfect goodness, and the most single-hearted intention

to rule for the well-being of the governed, could justify such a claim on the part of the Sovereign, or make its acceptance tolerable to the subject.

The misunderstanding of the nature of the kingdom of the Christ was not confined to the Jews of those days : it prevails largely at the present day.

Some people think that when Christ said, "My kingdom is not *of* this world," He meant that it was not *in* this world,—that it related entirely to the future life of the saints, after the resurrection, in heaven. A very slight examination of the sense in which He Himself and His immediate followers spoke of His kingdom is enough to show that whatever it is, it is a thing of this world. When the Baptist, when our Lord, when His Apostles, proclaimed to the Jews,—expecting that the kingdom of God would immediately appear,—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” could they possibly mean that thousands of years were to elapse before it should come? This cannot be, for on one occasion our Lord said plainly :—“Verily I say unto you, there be some of them which stand here which shall not taste of death till the kingdom of God come with power.”

The erroneous notion is partly due to a careless misapprehension of the meaning of the phrase “kingdom of heaven.” A very little attention would be enough to show the reader of the Gospels

that the phrase, "kingdom of heaven," used only by St. Matthew, means exactly the same thing as "kingdom of God," used by St. Mark and St. Luke.¹ A critical examination of some of these texts (to which we refer in a note below)² would prove that "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are equivalent to "Church of Christ." A mere glance at the hundred places, or thereabouts, in which the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" occur, would show that in nearly all of them the context defines them as meaning a state of things here on earth. To limit ourselves, by way of illustration, to the parables, there are thirty-two of them; they extend over the whole period of our Lord's public ministry; nineteen out of the thirty-two are parables of the kingdom:—"The kingdom of heaven is like this," and "the kingdom of heaven

¹ Thus, in recording the parable of the mustard seed, St. Matthew says: "The kingdom of *Heaven* is like to a grain of mustard seed" (xiii. 31). St. Mark (iv. 30) says, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of *God*? It is like a grain of mustard seed." In recording the mission of the apostles, St. Matthew says, the Lord bade them, "As ye go, preach, saying the kingdom of *Heaven* is at hand." St. Luke, in the parallel passage, says, He sent them "to preach the kingdom of *God*" (Matt. x. 7; Luke ix. 2).

² "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my *Church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the *kingdom of Heaven*," where church = kingdom of Heaven. See also 1 Thess. ii. 12.

is like that." The first of all the parables is that of the sower,—“the kingdom of heaven is like a sower,”—which relates to the preaching of the Gospel, and the way in which different classes of men would receive it; and the last of all the parables is that of the vine,—“I am the vine: ye are the branches,”—which illustrates the organic union of the Church with Christ. A mere glance at the parables, as they occur in all their beautiful familiarity to the memory, is enough to show that they speak of a state of things here upon earth. For example, it can only be here that the *seed* of the word sown falls by the wayside, or on stony ground, or is choked by thorns. It is only here that *tares* grow together with the wheat; they are bound into bundles and cast into the fire before the wheat is gathered into the garner of heaven. There are bad fish, as well as good, in the Church's *net* now, but when the net has been dragged through the ages of this life, and has reached the shore of eternity, only the good shall be put into vessels, and the bad shall be thrown away. It is here that the wise and foolish *virgins* wait for the Bridegroom's coming; there the doors have been shut, and they that were ready have sat down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. At the *marriage feast* here, some guests, alas! have not on the wedding garment; all are clad in white robes there.

The kingdom of God is not, indeed, as some of the

texts show us, limited to this life and this world ; it extends into the next life, has its final place in the new heavens and the new earth. Like man's life, which begins here and lives on in the next phase of being, so the "kingdom of heaven," the "kingdom of God," the "Church of Christ," begins its life here, and lives on in another and more glorious phase of existence eternally in the heavens.

Again, there are some who think that Christ's kingdom, so far as it relates to this life, is altogether internal and spiritual, quoting, in support of this idea, the text, "the kingdom of God is within you"; in pure misapprehension of the real meaning of the text, which is, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you," is already in the world, though you have failed to recognise it; and another text, "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," *i.e.*, not such a kingdom of conquest, and political ascendancy, and temporal honours and wealth, as the Jews were expecting, but, as so many prophecies had described it, a kingdom of peace, righteousness, and happiness, the result of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ. This would make the Dispensation of the Messiah a Religion only; but it was prophesied beforehand, it was proclaimed at its inauguration, it was actually established and exists as a Kingdom, the successor of the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's

vision, and accomplishment of what they typified and crudely aimed at, viz., the organisation of mankind into one harmonious society, a brotherhood of mankind, peaceful and virtuous, prosperous and happy, under the wise rule of a beneficent Monarch.

It is the notion of some people that they do honour to Jesus when they suppose that He is concerned only for the great spiritual interests of men; they think it derogatory to His divine dignity to suppose that He was much concerned for the improvement of man's temporal condition. It seems to be a common idea that the conditions of this life cannot be much mended; that we must all endure them as well as we can, and look for compensation for our sufferings here in the happiness of the next world. *We* may find our lot in this life tolerable, but the earthly lot of millions is most miserable, and that, very largely, through preventible causes. We are guilty of gross and cruel selfishness, when we tell such men to suffer patiently and wait for heaven, when they are suffering from the errors of our imperfect social systems, or from the faults of our neglect of our duties towards our fellow-men. We misrepresent Christ and His kingdom when we say that all this ignorance, poverty, vice, and misery, are the normal condition of things in the Dispensation of the Christ upon earth. We give cause for a very dangerous revolt against Christ and His kingdom.

In the face of all the ignorance, poverty, vice, misery, which exist in the nations of Europe, you tell the suffering people that this is the realisation of all the prophecies and promises of Christ's kingdom in this world, and that Christianity has nothing better to give, and no better hopes to offer for the condition of suffering humanity here. The miserable are taking you at your word; they are beginning to believe so much of your Christian teaching; and they are saying, If this is all which Christian civilisation can do for the masses of mankind, all it can even hold out the hope of to the end of the world, then Christianity is a failure, and we will try if we cannot find some new bases, some new principles on which to reconstruct society. It is not so! The kingdom of God, which Christ came to establish upon earth, includes the elevation of human character and the amelioration of the conditions of human life here in this world, as the first stage of a restoration of humanity to something still more glorious and blessed in the future phase of its existence.

They misunderstand God and Christ, and God's designs for man, and Christ's work, who think that it was only worthy of the God-Man to care for the future interests of the race, and derogatory to His dignity to care for its wretchedness here. It is worthy of the greatest kings, philosophers, statesmen, to promote the stability, prosperity, happiness of a single

nation. It is worthy of the Divine King, Philosopher, Statesman, to restore peace, virtue, prosperity, and happiness to a whole world. True, man's life here lasts only threescore years and ten ; nay, the average duration of a generation is only thirty years ; but the life of a nation lasts for centuries ; the life of the race here may last for tens of centuries before the end come ; true, it may possibly come to-morrow, but also it is very possible that we may yet be in the infancy of the world's life.

If one could see the misery of one great town unveiled for a moment, and catch for one moment its wail of sorrow, the cry of appeal which it sends continually up to heaven ; if one were forced to gaze for a whole day on the misery of the world, as it lies always under the eye of God, and to listen to the awful sound of its agonised appeal to its God, then, perhaps, it might be thought worthy of the Incarnate God, worth the Sacrifice of the Cross, to rescue this world from sin, and turn it into the kingdom of God which Isaiah describes.

Christ was not merely a religious teacher, who enunciated great truths, and left scholars to propagate those truths, and left the truths to work their own effect in the minds, and ultimately in the conduct, of men. He organised a society, that society He called a kingdom, and His design was that this kingdom should spread till it embraced mankind. It was

not a symbolical, unreal kingdom, but a real external organisation of men, women, and children. It aimed at internal progress and external conquest. Christ appointed a ceremony of initiation by which His disciples should be openly enrolled as His subjects; and another ceremony which should call them together at weekly intervals, and cement their union with Him and with one another. He enunciated laws, and insisted upon implicit obedience to them; He gave authority to a body of officials to administer the affairs of His kingdom, and provided for their continuity. He required of the citizens of His kingdom a revenue for the maintenance of its institutions and the honour of its king.

As Moses was a great statesman, who out of the twelve tribes organised a nation and a church, so Christ was a great statesman, who out of the nations of the world organised an empire and a church. Christ's method differs from that of all other statesmen in the recognition of the fact that the amelioration of the condition of mankind was to be wrought out, not in the region of politics, or science, or material prosperity, but in the region of morals, and in laying down a plan for the organisation of mankind on that basis. Christ's kingdom differs from all kingdoms of this world especially in this, that while other kings and statesmen find their wisest efforts baffled by the inherent folly and wickedness of mankind, and can

only resign themselves to it, Christ recognised that the amelioration of the condition of mankind was impossible without the communication of new spiritual forces, which should deal with these inherent faults of fallen human nature, and to those who enter into His kingdom He communicates those new spiritual forces by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Christ's plan of a spiritual empire leaves to the "Powers that be" of this world, which are themselves "ordained of God," are the "ministers of God appointed for this very thing," all that relates to the defence of the commonwealth from foreign enemies, the maintenance of internal order and security, the promotion of commerce and the arts, the punishment of crime. The plan of the spiritual empire commits to another set of ministers that which relates to the public worship of Almighty God, to the moral and spiritual life of the people. The temporal and the ecclesiastical are co-ordinate powers in the plan of the spiritual empire, the kingdom of Christ. Where the power of the State ends, there the power of the Church begins. Cæsar can only maintain external obedience by the sword; the church bids the citizen render a willing obedience to the law, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. The State can only organise the general platform of national well-being, and control the grosser injuries which man does to his fellows; the Church bids him abstain from

the vices which injure himself and society a thousand times more than all the crime, and not only abstain from injuring, but do his duty to his fellow-men. In short, the State can deal only with the material interests and the external life and order of society ; the Church deals with the internal life—the beliefs, hopes, and aims of the soul, which are the inner springs and regulators of the external life of man.

When the State fails to seek the aid of the Church of Christ, and to aid it in turn with every facility for fulfilling its functions, it is failing in wise statesmanship; when the State begins to legislate without regard to the higher legislation of Christ, it has entered upon a downward course. For a Christian state to formally sever its relations with the Church, and profess to rule independently of Christianity, is to put itself back sixteen centuries in the course of civilisation, and to enter upon a course of confusion, misery, and ruin.

If we inquire, What did this kingdom offer to its subjects in return for this entire obedience? we shall see it was still a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom not of this world. It did not offer to its subjects temporal rewards, power, honours, wealth. It appealed to that which is deepest, and highest, and noblest in human nature ; it offered to satisfy the inmost cravings and highest aspirations of man. It offered him God's pardon and love, and the indwelling of the

spirit of God, victory over his own disordered vicious nature, and a growth into the nobleness of perfect humanity ; it offered to put every man into his true place in the world, and give him his right work to do, and to guide him by a divinely-ordered path to a peaceful death and to a happy eternity beyond the grave.

To those who could take a wider view of the world and of human society, it offered the prospect of a brotherhood of nations which, while leaving to man all the advantages of national patriotism, and leaving every race to work out its own type of progress, secured the advantages of a universal empire in the maintenance of peace and the free mutual interchange of all the advantages of various climes. It offered to remove from society the causes of its disorder and unhappiness ; to secure universal liberty without licence ; and equality, by raising the lower to the level of the higher ; and a true fraternity of heartfelt mutual respect and divine charity.

This Kingdom was an essential part of Christ's plan for the salvation of the world. It was the great means by which He proposed to apply His spiritual gifts to mankind, and work out the designs of His providence in the future of the world's history.

His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, and a kingdom not of this world, but it had from the first a visible existence and an external organisation.

First, Christ; then Christ chose twelve apostles; He bade them make disciples,—so He named the subjects of His kingdom,—of all nations, baptizing them into His Church. And so we read, on the Day of Pentecost the number of the names of those assembled was 120, and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and the Church was thereby fully constituted; and the 3,000 who believed in Peter's preaching were baptized into the Church; and the Lord added to the Church daily by baptism those who were brought into a state of salvation. And so the Church spread from country to country, and subsequently from generation to generation, until it has come down to us.

The division of the Church into sections, the breaking down of the pales of discipline which should separate it from the world, the imperfect Christianity of its members, have obscured its glory, weakened its power to train up its own children into saintliness, and to win ground among the heathen nations; but there the Church is still, the sole hope which Christ has given us of the regeneration of human society here, and of fitting mankind for the better world to come. Like a great ship, with a leaky hull, and torn rigging, and a mutinous crew, she still staggers through the heavy seas, fraught with the destinies of mankind. Our hope is in the presence of her Lord, and in His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

PART IV.—THE PASSION AND DEATH.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE HOLY WEEK.

E reverently follow the Gospels in their detailed narrative of the last eventful days.

It would seem that every day (Luke xix. 47) Jesus came into Jerusalem, usually coming very early in the morning, according to the custom of the East, remaining all day, and returning in the evening to His lodging at Bethany. On the Monday morning, as He came in, occurred the cursing of the barren fig-tree, a miracle which differs from all His other miracles in being purely a miracle of destruction.¹ It is easy to see the Lord's intention in it. All His miracles had a spiritual significance, and so has this; in them the act of beneficence is the primary motive of the miracle, and the symbolism grows out of it; in this the miracle was wrought for

¹ The destruction of the herd of swine was only an incident in a miracle of healing.

the sake of the symbolism; and of the meaning of the symbolism we may take our Lord's own parable of the barren fig-tree as the authoritative explanation. He was come, in this His last visit to Jerusalem, in the avowed character of the King Messiah,—He was come to seek the fruit of many ages of cultivation bestowed upon the Jewish Church and nation; and He found a strong city and a magnificent temple, crowded with the Passover pilgrims, a grand worship, and myriads of victims; all the outward appearances of a flourishing Church; and within a High Priest who had determined on His murder, and a Sanhedrim which, as a body, had conspired with him to accomplish it; and hypocritical scribes, and Pharisees, and sceptical Sadducees, and worldly Herodians; and a people whose ideal of a Messiah was one who by political revolution and earthly conquest should gratify their revenge and ambition. It was the peremptory repetition, in striking symbol, of what the Lord had said before in parable, "Lo these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And this time there was no respite.

And so the Lord passed on, and entered the city and the Temple. And now, at this time, He repeated the act of authority which He had done three years before, on the occasion of His first entry upon His

public ministry. "He began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the Temple," and said unto them, "It is written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves!" (Matt. xxi. 12; Mark xi. 15-19; Luke xix. 45, 46).

A glance at the passage of Isaiah's prophecy from which our Lord quotes, and to which He alludes, will show the deep significance of the allusion. It is from one of the places where he is prophesying the redemption of the Gentiles and their equal privileges with the children of Abraham:—

"Let not the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people. . . . For thus saith the Lord . . . The sons of the strangers that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants. . . . Even them will I bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him besides them that are gathered unto him."

And the Prophet goes on with words which may well have been also in the minds of the Lord and of His hearers:—

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant," &c.

And yet further :—

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart : and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,” &c. (Is. lvi. 3, 6, 7, 8; lvii. 1).

The symbolism of the act in the light of the allusion, and under the circumstances, was that the King was come to cleanse the impurities of Israel and to admit the Gentiles into the kingdom of Heaven.

The Scribes and Chief Priests heard it, and their resolutions against Him were confirmed by what they heard, but they feared openly to interfere with Him, “because all the people was astonished at His doctrine” (Mark xi. 18).

“And the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them,” and the children, who had caught up the cry of the multitudes on the previous day, expressed the general feeling excited by His assumption of authority, and His “doctrine,” and these miracles, and cried in the Temple, saying, “Hosannah to the Son of David.” And the chief priests and scribes were sore displeased, and, as on the previous day, called on Jesus to rebuke and silence their acclamations:—“Hearest thou what these say?” But again our Lord accepted and justified the popular recognition of Him as the Christ :—“Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?” “And He left them,

and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there" (Matt. xx. 15-17).

The next day, the Tuesday of Holy Week, as Jesus and His disciples were walking to Jerusalem, the Apostles observed that the fig-tree to which their attention had been attracted the previous day, and which our Lord had cursed, had already "withered away" (Matthew): "dried up from the roots" (Mark). And they marvelled, and called their Lord's attention to it. The Lord took occasion from their wonder that His curse had been so quickly fulfilled to speak to them of the power of faithful prayer, which should enable them to do as wonderful things as this. And to this condition of prayer, faith, He added another, charity:—"When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses." Seeing that the prayer in question had cursed the fruitless fig-tree, the correction might have been needed by those who once would have called down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan village which refused them hospitality. And so they passed on their way.

It was a busy day; affairs were hurrying on to their great consummation. When the Lord was come into the Temple, the Chief Priests, and the

elders of the people came, and, interrupting Him as He was teaching, demanded His authority for acting as he was doing. They knew He had openly claimed to be the Messiah: that was His authority. He had declared, over and over again, that His Heavenly Father had given Him this authority. There was nothing to be gained by simply reiterating His claims to these men, who had finally rejected them. Therefore He replied, as He often did, and does, so as to throw back the questioner upon Himself, and leave Him to answer Himself,—“I will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you” what you ask:—“The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men?” And they reasoned with themselves,—“If we shall say from heaven, He will say, Why then did ye not believe him?” for the very purport of His ministry was to prepare the way for the kingdom, and the very climax of His prophetic office was when he pointed out Jesus as the Messiah. But they feared to say that it was not from heaven, “for all men held John to have been a prophet,” and they themselves seem, if not to have shared, at least not to have questioned, the popular belief in Him. They were reduced to the necessity of evading His question,—“We cannot tell.” And Jesus answering, said, “Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.” They are reduced to a pitiable confusion. They come arrogantly

professing that it is their right to inquire and decide upon his claim to be Messiah ; he asks them what is their decision on John's claim to be a prophet and the Forerunner of Messiah. If they admit their inability to determine the lower claim, how can they decide upon the higher ?

He proceeded immediately to turn their eyes inward upon themselves, and to show them, by means of a parable, the true character of their attitude towards John and towards Himself. "A certain man had two sons ; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not ; but afterward repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise, and he said, I go, sir, and went not. Whether of these twain did the will of his father ? They say unto him, The first."

Then Jesus showed them the application of the parable, and how they had condemned themselves. You chief priests and rulers are like the second son, who make a hypocritical pretence of respect and obedience to God's commandments, but really slight and reject them. The first son is like the publicans and harlots, who though once they openly and rudely refused to obey God, yet through John's preaching have come to a better mind, and repented and believed in me. "Verily I say unto you, the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness,

and ye believed him not ; but the publicans and the harlots believed him ; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

"Hear another parable," He went on, and spoke the terrible parable of the wicked husbandman, who beat and wounded and killed the servants successively sent to them by their Lord ; and when, at length, he sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son," said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. The meaning was not difficult. "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts," Isaiah had told them, "is the house of Israel." God had in the old time sent His prophets to His people, and they had ill-treated and slain them ; He whom He had now sent was His Son, who was entitled to the reverence due to the Son of God, and they were conspiring to kill him, that their temporal prosperity might not be disturbed,—“lest the Romans come and take away our place and nation.” What, therefore, he asks, “shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them?” A comparison of the Gospels leads us to conjecture that it was some of the bystanders¹ who replied to our Lord’s question. “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who

¹ Some maintain that it was the Chief Priests and elders who were led to make this admission, so fatal to themselves.

shall render him the fruits in their season." Then our Lord turns to the questioners, and accepting the sentence which the people have just pronounced, applies it to them in the words, "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43). He had thus really replied to their original inquisition. He was the Son of Him who had sent the prophets of old ; and as their forefathers had in their wicked blindness persecuted and slain the prophets, so they in like wicked blindness were about to slay Him, and the result of their crime would be precisely that which by their crime they were seeking to avert, God would take the kingdom from them, and give it to others. "And when they heard it they said, God forbid" (Luke xx. 16). For the Chief Priests and Pharisees "perceived that he had spoken this parable against them," and "they sought to lay hands on him, but they feared the multitude because they took him for a prophet."

Yet another parable He spoke to them, the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son, and the invited guests made light of it, caring more for their farms and their merchandise, and some even took the messengers and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. Whereupon the king was wroth, and gave command to send forth his armies, and destroy those murderers, and burn up their city. And in the place

of the invited guests he bids his servants go into the highways, and gather as many as they found, both bad and good, and so the wedding was furnished with guests. Again, the king's son is Himself. In the first parable, the son and heir was killed by the wicked husbandmen. Here it is on account of the son that the wicked guests are invited to partake of the king's banquet. Not now a demand for the fruits of the vineyard, but an invitation to come to the marriage. But the lesson is the same; they who refused to give the fruits of righteousness, equally refuse to receive the spiritual good things—pardon, enlightenment, faith, grace—which Christ offers. The priests and rulers, scribes and Pharisees rejecting, the publicans and harlots and the Gentiles, become the guests of the royal banquet. And He added a warning to those who did accept the Gospel invitation, in the case of the guest who, not having taken the pains to come "holy and clean, in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture," was also bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness.

Again, His enemies were afraid to arrest Him in the midst of the crowd of pilgrims who surrounded Him, hung on His words, believed in Him, were ready, no doubt, to defend Him from attack, needed, probably, but a word from Him to stir them up to some fanatical attack upon themselves; but they took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk.

The device was an ingenious one. His popularity made themselves powerless against Him. They proposed to put to Him, for His solution as a teacher and prophet, in the hearing of all the people who crowded about Him in the Temple, a question whose answer would involve Him in this dilemma,—if He should answer yes, it would shock the general feeling and destroy His popularity; if He should answer no, it would be an open preaching of sedition, and so they could employ the Roman power to do what they were not sufficiently powerful to do. So “they sent forth spies feigning themselves just men,” who began with treacherous compliments, “Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” (Mark xii. 14, 15.) “But Jesus perceived their craftiness,” and with a word tore away all their pretences. “Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar’s. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s. And they marvelled and held their peace” (Luke), “and left him and went their way” (Matthew). It certainly was a very striking solution

of the question. The production by his questioners of the coin with Cæsar's image and name as the current coin of the nation,¹ was an admission on their parts, nay, was an undeniable evidence, of all the historical and political facts of the case. His words were not only a sufficient reply, *ad hominem*—an evasion of a difficulty,—but they contain a profound solution of the religious difficulty of the case; and have sufficed to indicate the elucidation of difficult questions of the duties of the individual to the Church and the State ever since. They are pithy, and pregnant as a proverb; they are cast into poetical form,

Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,
And to God the things which are God's.

And they have passed into a proverb. It was one of those brilliant strokes of insight into the principles which underlie a difficult question, one of those felicitous expressions of the solution which belong to the very highest rank of practical intellect.

Then came the Sadducees, "which say there is no resurrection," and proposed one of the difficulties which seemed to them insoluble, and so seemed to justify their unbelief. Master, "Moses wrote unto us,"—this statement that it was Moses who wrote it is of the essence of their case,—"Moses wrote unto us, If a

¹ There is a Rabbinical saying, "The coin of the country shows the master."

man die having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother." Then they put an imaginary case,—“There were seven brethren who all married a wife successively without issue, and all died one after another; last of all the woman died also, for all men die. But if all men come to life again, then at the resurrection whose wife of the seven will this woman be?” Their inference is, that Moses did not believe in the resurrection, or he would never have given a commandment which could lead to such a confusion.

Our Lord calmly took their question as it stood, and in a few brief words showed that their insoluble difficulty vanished, and was no difficulty at all, in the light of a fuller knowledge of the conditions of the resurrection, “Ye err because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God.” And having thus easily disposed of their captious question, and made their attempt to perplex and confound Him the occasion of a manifestation of more than human knowledge, He proceeds to address Himself to the disbelief of the resurrection which underlay their question. If they did not receive the rest of the Scripture, they did believe the Pentateuch. It is true that the absence of clear statement of a future life from the Books of Moses is a remarkable fact,

and to some a difficulty to the present day. He took one of the best known passages in the Books of Moses; where at the burning bush God revealed Himself to Moses as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. iii. 6), and our Lord drew from that one phrase the profound and unanswerable argument, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"; therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living when God spoke to Moses, more than 200 years after the death of the latest of the three great patriarchs; "for," he draws the general deduction, "all live unto Him." And again we read, "they were astonished at his doctrine," and some of the Scribes openly expressed their admiration, "Master, thou hast well said" (Luke xx. 39).

"But when the Pharisees heard that the Sadducees had been put to silence they were gathered together; and one of them which was a lawyer (scribe) asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (*i.e.* the whole Scripture).—Matt. xxii. 34-40.

It is the last point but one of his public teaching, and it consists of a summing up of the Old Testament Scriptures, with a declaration of the Gospel interpretation of them. It is the Sermon on the Mount in summary.

“ And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God and there is none other but he, and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him,” not with the tone of a successful disputant, but with the calm authority of one who speaks from a higher plane of knowledge and station, “ Thou art not far from the kingdom of God ” ; his ready acknowledgment of the evangelical interpretation of the Scriptures, placed him at the very threshold of the kingdom, still only at the threshold ; he needed repentance, and faith in Christ, to place him within the kingdom, among the disciples of the Lord. And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all. Then the Lord turned upon His questioners, and proposed to them a counter-question, “ What think ye of the Christ, whose son is he ? ”

“ They say unto Him, The Son of David.”

“ How then doth David in spirit [of prophecy] call him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool ? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son ? ” The inference to which he would lead them is obvious. He who was David's Son, and yet

David's Lord, must be superior to David. How superior? This David's Lord, whom God calls to sit "on his right hand," who is He? They saw the inference, and again, as in the case of his former question, "no man was able to answer him a word" (Matt. xxi. 42-46). This is the last point of His public teaching: after summing up the law and the prophets in the one word, love, finally He puts before them Christ, as David's Lord, sitting on the right hand of God.

We pause for a moment to remark on the calm self-possession, the fulness and depth of wisdom, the perfect dignity with which our Lord met these repeated and varied assaults. It reminds us of the Temptation in the Wilderness, when with similar brevity, and insight, and appeal to Scripture, He met and foiled the attempts of Satan.

Then the Lord turned from his opponents "to the multitude and to His disciples," and after some preliminary words He poured forth, in the hearing of those who had hardened their hearts to reject or to destroy Him, those woes which form His last utterance; beginning by denouncing them because they would not become disciples of His kingdom, and hindered others:—

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

and concluding with the prophecy:—

“Ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure¹ of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

“Wherefore, behold I² send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”

Then in the strain of tender, yearning grief which runs through all his character he mourns over the fulfilment of his own denunciations.

“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! How often³ would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. xxiii.).

¹ As the heathen nations who preceded the Israelites in the land filled up the measure of their iniquities, and were destroyed by them. *See Acts vii. 52.*

² Observe that He speaks of Himself as the Sender of the new race of prophets and wise men and scribes, whom He classes with those whom God sent of old, thus inferring His unity with God.

³ “‘How often’ includes, at the same time, all the calls of the former prophets, with all the invitations of those afterwards sent, and known beforehand to be in vain, although it places the calls and invitations of Christ Himself in the centre.”—Stier, “Words of the Lord Jesus.”

I.e. till the great second advent,¹ "when every eye shall see him (and they also that pierced him), and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

At his trial before the Sanhedrim he referred them to the same time. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man coming in the clouds."

It was the Lord's last public utterance to the people generally, an awful farewell. It reminds us that the last word of God by the last of the ancient prophets was "I will send you Elijah [John the Baptist] the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest [otherwise] I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi iv. 5, 6), and John the Baptist's last word of public teaching was "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). He began the sermon on the mount with eight beatitudes, he concludes his public teaching with eight woes.

There is an incident related by St. John (xii. 20) which occurred on one of the early days of this week, but on which of them it is impossible to determine. It is convenient to introduce it here. "There were

¹ Some hold that these concluding words are words of hope, that they are a prophecy of a time when Israel will acknowledge Christ as Messiah, and welcome Him with Hosannahs.

certain Greeks among them which came up to worship at the feast," commentators are agreed that they were heathens in religion. They may have come from one of the Grecised cities of Galilee. The same came to Philip which was of Bethsaida in Galilee, and desired him saying "Sir, we would see Jesus." They in common with other people could see him and hear him so as to gratify a mere curiosity like that of Zaccheus; but the narrative implies that they sought a special interview. Philip does not take upon himself at once to introduce them. "He cometh and telleth Andrew;" and after consultation together, the two "tell Jesus." "And Jesus answered them, saying":—We understand this to mean that Jesus granted to these Gentiles the interview they sought, and that this is the substance of his discourse to them. The tenor of it leads us to conjecture that these Gentiles had seen or heard of the triumphal entry; they had certainly heard something of the expectations so many were entertaining that "the kingdom of God would immediately appear." They were disposed to believe in Him;—"Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The Lord declares that the time has come for his glorification; and then, looking for-

ward to what is so soon about to happen to him, he gives these inquirers the clue to its meaning. His death, of which they would soon hear, which perhaps they would witness, and which would seem to falsify his declaration of coming glory, was the necessary condition of his glory :—except a corn of wheat die it abideth alone, only if it die does it germinate into new life and bring forth a hundred-fold. The profound parable of nature whose meaning is inexhaustible. Christ must pass through death in order that he may attain to the higher life and power of his risen humanity. More than this, the Son of God descended into the death and corruption of this sinful world, that out of him might spring into the air of heaven the myriads of the redeemed. And here lies another profound meaning : the grains which spring up out of the grain which dies and germinates are of the same kind, so they who spring up out of Christ's death and rise again in Him, shall be like Him, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

Glory through suffering is the great thought which lies under many of our Lord's utterances at this time. He goes on to utter words which apply to those who would be his disciples. "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." He had said the same words before, immediately after He had first plainly spoken to His disciples of approaching suffering, shame, and death (Matt. xvi. 25 ; Mark

viii. 34 ; Luke ix. 24). He says them now in the same connexion. On that former occasion he had said "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me," and now again he implies the same thing: "If any man will serve me let him follow me." He must follow me in my death, but He adds, and "where I am there shall my servant be," viz., in my consequent glory, for "if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

Then, for the first time, the coming horror casts a shadow over his soul; we shall find him give repeated expression to it hereafter: "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say?" What his lower will says is, "Father, save me from this hour!" Then his higher will corrects this first shrinking back: "But for this cause came I unto this hour." And the struggle ends in the prayer, "Father, glorify thy name." Not *my* name, it is the Father's glory which in utter self-abnegation he desires to be glorified in himself. We see plainly it is the beginning of the horror, and the shrinking of the lower will, and the triumph of the higher will, whose climax we shall see in Gethsemane.

"Then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

Three times, at three great crises, the Father spoke from heaven to the Son. In each case partly for His own assurance and support, incidentally for the assurance and confirmation of the faith of others; first

at His baptism, when He entered upon his Messianic office; then at the transfiguration, when Moses and Elias visited Him, and spoke to Him of the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem; and now again when his soul is first assailed by the mysterious horror of the coming passion, in answer to his renewed offering of himself to fulfil his Father's will to the end.

“The people that stood by and heard it said that it thundered; some said that an angel spake to him. Jesus said this voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.” Then his mind going forward to the result of that obedience to death of which he had spoken; he continues: “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die.”

The fact that St. John concludes this scene by saying, “These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them,” seems to indicate that the scene occurred after that long contest with the Jews on Tuesday which we have described. This would be consistent with the common belief that our Lord did not visit Jerusalem on the Wednesday, or on the Thursday until the evening, and then did not show himself openly in the temple. And the whole tenor of that discourse with the Jews, and this with the Gentiles seems in harmony with this chronological arrangement.

It was perhaps these words of the Lord still ringing in their ears, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," which led one of the disciples, as they went out of the Temple, to say unto Him, "Master, see what manner of stones¹ and what buildings are here?" He replied briefly and emphatically, "Seest thou these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2; Mark xiii. 1, 2; Luke xxi. 5).

As they returned to Bethany "He sat upon the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple"; at the same place, probably, where he had paused on Palm Sunday, in his triumphal entry, to gaze upon the magnificent spectacle. What He had said then, and what He had repeated on this day, occupied their minds, and Peter and James, and John and Andrew came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world."

We must not here go into the details of the prophecy which follows; we can only briefly point out that:—

First, He warns them against being deceived by false prophets, or alarmed by every threatening portent: "See that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

Then He goes on to utter the great prophecy,

¹ Josephus tells us there were foundation stones in the Temple 25 cubits long, 12 wide, and 8 high, of the purest white marble.

which, incidentally called forth by the question of the disciples, is so appropriate here, among the last utterances of the Lord, that we suppose He would have delivered it even without any such request.

He speaks of two great events, the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the destruction of the national polity and the religious worship which had endured since Moses; and the final destruction of the world at the last great day. Both these were advents of Christ; one typical of the other. It is the manner of the ancient prophecy in one utterance to speak together of a nearer and a more distant fulfilment, connected in the Divine counsels; and so to speak of them as if they were beheld in one vision, without distinguishing clearly the nearer from the more distant fulfilment. "Future events in time," says the Bishop of Lincoln (Wordsworth), "may be compared to distant objects in place. In a mountainous country two ridges of hills, rising the one above the other, are seen from a distance almost as one, although there may be many miles between them; and it is only when the spectator arrives at the summit of the first ridge that he is aware of the chasm between it and the second. So it is with future events. Thus the Prophets of the Old Testament pass rapidly from describing the first advent of Christ to the second advent, so that the two advents seem to be blended together in one." And in this prophecy of our Lord's we have the same combination of the two great de-

structions, of Jerusalem and of the world. "The two events, however, are not confusedly mingled together, as might seem to a careless reader. Both are together in the vision before our Lord's eyes, but not confounded. In the earlier part, as far as Matth. xxiv. 28, the nearer event, the destruction of Jerusalem, stands out clearly, although through it there doubtless appears the vast outline of the farther judgment; and in the words in which the former is pictured the latter is not forgotten. After the 28th verse the more distant and awful event comes out as the prominent and distinct object of the prophecy, though not without constant remembrance of the type and shadow which so fitly prefigured it. In the next chapter the first coming of judgment is past and forgotten; the last stands out grandly and alone. The great Prophet has travelled on in His prophetic course, and is gazing on the mightier range beyond."¹

We refer the reader to his Bible for the prophecy, and only transcribe its magnificent conclusion. "Then shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet,

¹ Bishop Walsham How, "Comm. on Gospels."

and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 29-31; Mark xiii. 24-28; Luke xxi. 25-28).

They had asked Him "When shall these things be?" and He reserves His reply to this part of their question to the last: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son [Mark], but my Father only." It shall come suddenly and unexpectedly. "As in the days that were before the flood,"—that first great destruction of the world,—“they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” And He left this till the last (apparently) in order to impress upon their minds the practical conclusion, "Watch therefore and pray [Mark], for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." "Watch ye therefore and pray always" (says St. Luke's gospel), "that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The Lord proceeds with striking iteration to urge upon them this practical lesson of watchfulness by several parables.

The man taking a journey to a far country, who gave to each of his servants their work, and commanded the porter to watch:—"Watch ye, therefore," &c.

The thief in the night: "Therefore be ye also ready."

The ten virgins waiting for the Bridegroom, who comes at midnight when they have all fallen asleep, and some have let their lamps go out.

The parable of the talents pursues the idea of the rewards and punishments which, when He comes, He will distribute among His disciples according to their fidelity.

And He concludes with a representation of the tremendous scene of the final judgment, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him; then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. . . . Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; for," &c. "Then shall He say unto them on His left hand: Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for," &c. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

This great prophecy of the coming of Christ, and this revelation of the final scene, in which many previous partial revelations are gathered up and completed, closes another phase of the teaching of the Lord.

There is no indication in the Gospels which leads us to appropriate any recorded act or saying of our Lord to Wednesday in Holy Week. On the contrary, as we have seen, the natural inference from what our Lord said to the Scribes and Pharisees on Tuesday is that those were his last public words. We conclude that on this day the Lord remained at Bethany with his disciples.

But the day is marked by one event in the history of the passion; it is the day of the Betrayal.

The character and career of Judas present one of the most difficult of problems to the student of the character and motives of men.

We assume that when our Lord chose him he had at that time the elements of a great character, and was as likely to turn out worthy to sit on one of the twelve thrones as any of the others. From the fact that he was entrusted with the common purse of the company, and made its disbursements and distributed its charities,—in short, was its treasurer,—we infer that he had the qualities which make a good steward: he was shrewd, accurate, careful of money. The temptation to which such a character is liable is over-care about money,—covetousness. And Judas fell before this temptation. John tells us that before the last journey to Jerusalem he had already so far fallen that he had begun to pilfer from the money under his care (John xii. 6). He tells us that the indignation

of some at what they called the waste of Mary's precious ointment, which might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor, was originated by Judas (John xii. 4, 5), and that his anger really arose from disappointed covetousness: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

The next step is that at which we now arrive.

Two days before the Passover (Matthew, Mark), "the Chief Priests, and the Scribes, and elders of the people assembled together unto the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew xxvi. 3-5). "Then entered Satan into Judas [John] surnamed Iscariot" (of Kerioth to distinguish him from the other Judases of the disciples), and "he went unto the Chief Priests" (Matthew), "and captains" (John), and said unto them, What will ye give me and I will deliver him unto you? "And they were glad, and covenanted to give him" (John) "thirty picces of silver" (Matthew), "and he promised and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude" (John).

In the endeavour to account for the monstrous act a theory has been suggested that Judas was irritated

by our Lord's hesitation to seize upon the power and kingdom of which he had been talking these three years, and that he sought thus to precipitate an open collision between the Jewish authorities and Jesus and his disciples, and to force him into immediate and decisive action.

Another theory of the same kind is that Judas was so well aware of his master's perfect innocence in every respect that he was quite sure that on trial he would be acquitted ; he would get his thirty pieces of silver and no harm done.

The Gospels give no hint of any such motives. They seem, quite consistently and in several places, to intimate that covetousness is the sole and sufficient explanation of the monstrous conduct of Judas. Grown into a passion, broken out into theft, irritated by disappointment, it had laid him open to Satan, whose powerful evil influence, working on all this evil in his soul, hurried him into the commission of the last monstrous wickedness. There needs no more subtle explanation. It is according to our every-day experience that a master-passion which has undermined the moral sense by a course of lesser sin, under the influence of temptation and opportunity, leaps at a bound into some extreme of wickedness. It is quite according to our every-day experience that a man in such a crisis seems to lose the power of comparing the wickedness and the danger of his act with the small advantage to be gained by it. He

seems for the time to be under some strong abnormal influence,—Satan has entered into him. It is quite in harmony with our experience that the man should persist against a number of slight incidents which might, one would have thought, have given him pause, and that, as soon as the crime has been consummated, the scales should fall from his eyes, and he should see as clearly, and be as amazed and shocked at his own deed, as other men.

This is the awful lesson of the example of the traitor-apostle, that the man who gives way to any form of sin is never safe from being hurried through it into the extremest acts of unutterable baseness or monstrous crime ; and that the highest station, the most sacred calling, nay, the most holy surroundings, the greatest grace, will not shield the man who thus lays his soul open for Satan to enter in.

His public ministry had been consciously and deliberately brought to a close, as we have seen, on the Tuesday, when all its salient points had been summed up, as in some great peroration, in the controversies with priest and scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee, and Herodian ; in the historical allusions from John's baptism forward ; in the parables of the husbandmen and the marriage supper ; in the woes. Wednesday seems to be an interval which divides two great stages of the work. Thus far the *prophet* has spoken his message from God. Now the *priest* is about to offer the atoning sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

N Thursday, in Holy Week, it is plain from the Gospel narrative that our Lord did not go into Jerusalem until the evening. We read, "Then came the day of unleavened bread when the Passover must be killed" (Luke). "The disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover"? (Matt. xxvi. 17; Mark xiv. 12), "and he sendeth forth two of his disciples [Peter and John (Luke)], and saith unto them, Go ye into the city," and "when ye are entered into the city" (Luke), "there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water, follow him" "into the house where he entereth in" (Luke), "and say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us."

“ Now when the evening was come ” (Matthew) “ he cometh with the twelve ” (Mark) and “ sat down, and the twelve apostles with him ” (Luke).

The Apostles fully shared with their countrymen the belief that the Messiah would found a fifth great temporal empire, like those of Assyria and Persia, Greece and Rome only more extensive and glorious, and that he would thus make the Jews the dominant race, the nobles, of the world. It was a natural result of this belief that they should indulge in vague and vast ambitions as to the positions of power and grandeur which the monarch of this world-wide empire would assign to them, whom he had chosen from the beginning as the companions of his fortunes, and the assistants of his labours, who had believed in his future greatness from the first, and been faithful to him in his early years of obscurity.

We have already seen that these ambitions went so far as to lead to jealousies and disputes among themselves. The Jews would be the dominant race in the universal monarchy, and they twelve, chosen by the Lord from among all His countrymen, would doubtless be foremost among the princes, chief over the ministers of the kingdom, but who should be greatest among themselves? On several occasions this rivalry had come under the notice of the Lord, and He had taken steps to correct it.

First¹ at Capernaum, in the earlier days of His ministry (soon after the transfiguration), "there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest" (Mark, Luke) "in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.). "And he sat down and called the twelve." "And took a child and set him in the midst of them," and directed their attention to him, by a gesture. And when they had looked upon the child standing in his simplicity and innocence with wondering eyes among them, the Lord took him in His arms with natural human affection, while He expressed in words the meaning of the living symbol. "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew).

Again, on the last journey to Jerusalem, after Jesus had said to the young ruler,² who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and take up the cross and follow me" (Mark). Peter presently said,—

"Behold, *we have* forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall

¹ Matt. xviii. 1-5; Mark ix. 33-37; Luke ix. 46-48.

² Matt. xix. 16-22.; Mark x. 17-22; Luke xviii. 18-23.

we have therefore? Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 27-28).

It was only a few days after this that Salome came with James and John, asking the Lord to grant her a boon, that her two sons might sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom.¹ And the rest were moved with indignation against the two brethren. And Jesus again took occasion to say to them all, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority among them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant. For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." A lesson far too deep for them at that time, still too deep for most of us; that the church of Christ is indeed a kingdom, but not of this world, and so different from the kingdoms of this world that its princes should be the most humble and unostentatious, and the most powerful should wield the power of moral influence only.

¹ Matt. xx. 20; Mark. x. 35.

This very evening, St. Luke's Gospel (xxii. 24-30) tells us, the old rivalry broke out again, "there was a strife among them which should be accounted the greatest."¹

After this backward glance we shall better appreciate the remarkable interlude which our Lord introduced into the great transactions of that great occasion. We know how the Evangelists narrate the most amazing facts, the most moving incidents, in calm, simple narrative, without a word to express their own feeling of them, or specially to call the attention of their readers to them. This is the one exception to the rule: St. John prefaces his account of the feet-washing with the words, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God," yet performed this wonderful act of condescension. St. John says, supper having begun,²—it may very well have been at the time of the first ceremonial hand-washing hereafter mentioned,—Jesus "riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments," apparently both pallium and tunic, reducing Himself to the likeness of

¹ It is probable that the words of rebuke which St. Luke records were not spoken at the moment, but afterwards, when the Lord had prepared the way for them by the striking symbolical act which we have to consider.

² Not "after supper being ended," as our version translates it.

the scantiest clad of the lower class of slaves; then He girded a towel about Him, and poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. It was the act of a slave, performing the humblest of services to his master's guests.¹ And the Apostles sat in silent awe and reverent wonder, while the Lord went from one to another, and performed this menial office for them.

But when He came to Peter, his sense of the incongruity, his feeling of respect, would not suffer him to persevere in the attitude of wondering passive submission; he who once before remonstrated, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee," again ventured upon remonstrance. He shrank back from the Lord's approach, he deprecated his Lord's act: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." But Peter persists; having broken the awed silence he has gained boldness, he is not content to submit now, and await the promised explanation of its significance; he protests peremptorily "Thou shalt never wash my feet." The patient Lord, allowing for his good intentions, con-

¹ St. John the Baptist probably alludes to the same menial service when he declares himself not worthy to unloose the latchet of the shoes of Him who should come after him.

descends to argue with him ; and giving a further meaning to the symbolism, says, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Whereupon Peter, with a most characteristic mingling of impetuosity and real love for his Lord, instantly flies to the other extreme, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." To which the Lord replies, following up the new symbolism he has introduced, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."¹ And he adds, "And ye are clean, but not all ; for," explains the Evangelist, "he knew who should betray him ; therefore he said, Ye are not all clean."

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

St. Luke, chapter xxii. 24, probably refers to this symbolical act and its explanation ; only he mentions

¹ It was the custom of the guests at a banquet to wash the whole body before going, the dust was again washed off their sandalled or slippared feet when they arrived at the guest-chamber.

what John does not, the immediate occasion of it in the strife among them that very evening which of them should be accounted the greatest; and he records some words spoken at once, in which, as on a former occasion, he tells them that greatness in the kingdom of heaven is estimated by different standards from those of earthly kingdoms. "Ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve." "For,"—these seem to be the subsequent words after the feet-washing,—“whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth, but I am among you as he that serveth.” Then He again comforts them, perplexed and cast down, by the assurance that the promises He has made them of grandeur and power in His kingdom are real, though the grandeur and power be different in kind from that which they anticipate,—different, and of a higher order. “Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations,” He recognises their claims on His love; and he renews his promises that He will abundantly satisfy them; “I appoint [bequeath] unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;” sit at the royal banquet, and act as vice-gerents of the king.

The mode in which it was customary at this time

to celebrate the great festival of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt was as follows :¹—

Relations, friends, neighbours, arranged themselves beforehand into parties of not less than ten, to partake of the feast. The inhabitants of the holy city accommodated these parties in their houses so far as there was room for them, the rest ate it in their lodgings in the suburbs, or in their tents pitched round about the city. One of the party carried the paschal lamb on his shoulder to the temple ; there a careful organisation arranged the numerous sacrifices and facilitated the speedy accomplishment of the prescribed ceremonial. Each man sacrificed his lamb, and a priest caught some of the blood in a basin and passed it on through a chain of Levites to the altar, at whose base it was poured out ; the internal fat of the victim was taken out and given to the priest to be burnt upon the altar. The sacrificer then took his victim away to his temporary abode.

There it was spitted on two transverse spits of wood, care being taken that not a bone should be broken, and it was roasted for the festal meal. Unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and a sauce of

¹ I have assumed that the Last Supper was the true Passover, as the three synoptical gospels so plainly state, and that the difficulties with which St. John's gospel surrounds this assumption, are capable of explanation.

vinegar and spices, were eaten with it, and four cups of red wine mixed with water, were passed round the company at stated intervals. A service of praise, called the Hallel, was sung, divided into two parts, the first consisting of Psalms cxiii., cxiv., the second of Psalms cxv.-cxviii., inclusive. The guests adopting the custom of the time reclined at table, which was probably arranged in three sides of a square, the chief of the party acting as the master of the feast.

“When the party was arranged, the first cup of wine was filled and a blessing was asked by the head of the family on the feast, as well as a special one on the cup. Then they washed their hands. The bitter herbs were then placed on the table, and a portion of them eaten, either with or without the sauce, and they washed their hands again. The unleavened bread was handed round next, and some of it eaten with the bitter herbs dipped in the sauce. Afterwards the lamb was placed on the table in front of the head of the family. Before the lamb was eaten the second cup of wine was filled, and the son [or some one of the guests representing him] in accordance with Exodus xii. 26, asked the father of the family the meaning of the feast. “What mean ye by this service?” and the master of the family replied, “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered

our houses," with a further application of Deut. xxvi. 5, &c.

"A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and laid upon us hard bondage: And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and wonders: And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey."

Then the first part of the Hallel was sung. This having been gone through, the lamb was carved and eaten. After eating it they washed again. The third cup of wine was poured out and drunk, and soon afterwards the fourth. The second part of the Hallel was then sung, and concluded the prescribed ceremonial.

Our plan does not require us, and our limits do not permit us, to enter into the details of all that was done and said at this supper, which occupies five chapters of St. John's gospel; it is the less necessary that we should do so because it is one of the most popularly familiar parts of the sacred history. We can do little more than indicate broadly the order of events and call attention to the salient features.

It was probably after the earlier part of the ceremonial was fulfilled, and while the company was

engaged in the substantial part of the supper "as they did eat," that Jesus "was troubled in spirit" and made the announcement that one of them should betray him. "And they were exceeding sorrowful" (Matthew, Mark), "and looked one on another doubting of whom he spake" (John). Suspicion fixed on no one, and a fear seems to have fallen upon each lest he should be the one who should do this; they began to ask him one by one, "Is it I? and another said Is it I?" but our Lord declined to point out the traitor, only he repeated "It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish." Then Peter beckoned to John who reclined at table next to his master,—Peter perhaps being next Him on His other side, and therefore behind Him as He reclined on His left side,—and motioned to him (John) to ask who it was of whom He spake. John, accordingly, throwing back his head,¹ so that it touched his master's breast, asked him in a low voice, "Lord, who is it?" and the Lord in the same tone, unheard by the rest, replied "He to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it; and when he had dipped the sop he gave it to Judas Iscariot." No doubt an answering gesture from John intimated to Peter the meaning of the Lord's act, and pointed out to him also which was the traitor. None of the others would know, for the very act by which the

¹ This seems to be what the original implies.

Lord thus pointing him out was a customary act of honour and kindness from a superior to an inferior at the table.

It is not possible to determine with certainty whether it was now immediately, or subsequently after the institution of the Eucharist, that Judas left the room. The ancient Fathers take the latter view, and it is assumed in the exhortation in the Communion Service,¹ but the more modern commentators hold that immediately after giving him the sop the Lord bade him "What thou hast resolved to do do quickly," and that Judas at once, in confusion, went out.

Then Jesus began to prepare His disciples for what was to follow. "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. As I said unto the Jews so now I say to you, I go away, and whither I go ye cannot come. Peter said unto him, Lord whither goest thou? Jesus saith unto him, whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus said unto him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

¹ "Lest after the taking of that holy Sacrament the devil enter into you as he entered into Judas."

It is not possible to determine certainly whether the prescribed ceremonial of the Passover was first strictly completed, and then our Lord, taking a cake of the paschal bread, and filling another cup of wine, instituted the great sacrament of the Gospel, of whether, when the eating of the paschal lamb was ended, He merged the Passover into the sacrament by using the fourth and last of the ceremonial cups for the institution of the new memorial, before the Passover was concluded, and the final Hallel sung. Nor is the question of any great importance; in either case the Passover, the memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and from the destroying angel, by the paschal lamb, was taken as the basis on which the new memorial of the spiritual deliverance by means of the great Sacrifice was established.

“He took bread,¹ and when He had given thanks He brake it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body, which is given² for you: Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper, He took the cup; and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament [Covenant],

¹ In the original, “the bread,” the loaf, one of the loaves provided for the Passover.

² Present tense, “being given” (St. Luke), “being broken” (St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 24).

which is shed¹ for you, and for many for the remission of sins: Do this as oft as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.”² The Lord, we have suggested, has already entered upon his High-Priestly work, and this is part of it. His breaking the bread, and saying, “This is my body, which is given for you,” His taking the cup, and saying, “This cup is the new testament of my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins,” was a solemn dedication of the Victim. He had said, “No man taketh it [my life] from me, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John x. 18); and here He anticipates what Judas and the Chief Priests and Pilate were about to accomplish, and voluntarily offers himself. It is this which converts the martyrdom into the Sacrifice, as it is the dignity of the Victim which makes that Sacrifice a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the world.

The full significance of what our Lord herein did and said would probably hardly be at once apparent to the Apostles.

When the great sacrifice had been offered;—

And when the Lord had “opened their understanding,” and had shown them “in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself,” “how Christ ought to

¹ Being shed.

² Harmonised narrative, from the Prayer of Consecration, Holy Communion Service.

have suffered these things and to enter into his glory";—

And when the Holy Spirit had brought all things to their remembrance, and had led them into all truth;—

And when they compared these words with those which He had spoken before in the synagogue of Capernaum, "I am the Bread of Life, which came down from heaven, that men may eat thereof, and not die. And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day, for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me";—

Then we find the full significance of this New Memorial understood, and the breaking of the bread at once takes its place as the great act of the Church's worship,¹ and the great means of communion with Christ.

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye shew the Lord's death" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

¹ Acts ii. 42, 46.

“The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. x. 16, 17).

Let us not fail to see clearly the significance of the Institution.

When man had fallen God came to him, called him out from the place where he had hidden himself in shame and fear, led him to confession of his sin, gave him the promise of a Saviour, and taught him to show his faith in the promised Saviour, and to plead His merits and death in the rite of sacrifice, and clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of the slain lambs, a type of the clothing of the righteousness of Christ. That rite of sacrifice at once became the great act of worship through which man obtained access to God, seeking pardon and blessing; through which God gave by anticipation the gifts which Christ should in the fulness of time purchase for mankind with His precious blood-shedding. The sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation were offered every morning and every evening, were multiplied on the Sabbaths and new moons and great festivals; once a year all Israel joined in the great Passover sacrifice in token of the great deliverance which gave them a national existence; once a year the High Priest entered into the very presence of God, in the Most Holy Place, to make a solemn atonement for the people.

All the long series of sacrifices, with their various shades of meaning, were memorials looking forward to the great Sacrifice of the Incarnate Son of God on Calvary. They were all fulfilled in that. And now, on the eve of the great Sacrifice, the Lord solemnly appoints a new symbolical memorial, and commands it to be adopted henceforth as the great act of His Church's worship, by which they shall show their faith in Christ crucified, and plead His merits and precious death before the throne of grace.

The old symbolical system of worship was not abruptly swept away when the new was introduced. The two overlapped for a time, but the one gradually died out while the other grew and spread; so that, after a while, it came to pass that the system of sacrifice, which had formed the centre of the worship, not only of the Jews but of all the great nations of antiquity, had entirely disappeared, and the breaking of the bread alone existed as the memorial, till the end of time, of the great Sacrifice of Calvary.

Again, it is only by a spiritual union with Christ, and through the grace which flows to us from Christ, that we are able to live to God. Christ is our life. And this great truth is symbolised in this new memorial. Not only the bread is broken, and the blood-red wine poured out, but Christ gives them to His disciples, and bids them eat; they are not mere empty figures of Christ feeding us with Himself, but

in them Christ does actually feed us with the heavenly bread which is Himself; and the bread which He gives is, not only figuratively but actually (though spiritually), His body and blood, by which He gives us eternal life and promise of a glorious resurrection, by which He dwells in us and we in Him, so that as He lives by the Father so we live by Him.¹

To give the whole of our Lord's discourse on this occasion would be to transcribe several chapters of St. John's Gospel.² We must refer the reader to them, and content ourselves with briefly indicating the chief topics of the discourse. First, in view of His approaching removal from His disciples, He gives them assurances full of hope and comfort:—"Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you among the mansions of my Father's house. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Then, in reply to Thomas's remark, "We know not whither Thou goest: how can we know the way?" He makes the famous declaration:—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by Me!" And again, in reply to Philip's request, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," He makes the equally important reply, entering into

¹ See John vi.

² *Ibid.* xiv. xv. xvi.

the deep mystery of His own relation to the Godhead :—" He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself : the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works [that I do]."

Then He proceeds to speak of the third person of the blessed Trinity, and to promise His perpetual presence in His Church :—" I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the spirit of truth, that He may abide with you for ever. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. . . . In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. . . . The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." Then, recurring to His departure :—" Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. I said, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe."

Then He spoke the last of the parables, to illustrate the profound subject He had touched upon above, of their union with Him through the Spirit :—

" I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot

bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. . . . Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples."

He speaks of the love He bore them, and of the proof He is about to give of it, in laying down His life for them, and bids them love one another. He foretells that the world will hate and persecute them. He forewarns them of it, that when it shall come they may remember that He foretold it, and may not be offended. Again He recurs to the office and work of the Holy Spirit :—" To reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," and " to guide the disciples unto all truth." And finally dwells again on His departure :—" A little while, and ye shall see me, and again a little while, and ye shall not see me, because I go unto the Father." And when they complain that they cannot understand, He says plainly, " I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again I leave the world and go unto the Father." " The Father loveth you because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

His disciples replied, " Now speakest thou plainly, now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee ; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

Our Lord concludes in the spirit in which He so often concludes His sayings, like some strain of

solemn music which ends in a plaintive minor key, and leaves a gentle sadness on the soul:—"Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Then He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and uttered that great prayer in which the Son's soul is laid open to the Father, and we are permitted with reverent awe to listen to the communication of the Son of Man at this solemn time with the Almighty Father. He speaks of His Father's glory, and His own glory in the accomplishment of the redemption of mankind. "Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may also glorify Thee, as Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him. And this is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth [in His pure and obedient life]; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Then He prays for His disciples, that when He is removed they may be kept

safe in the midst of an evil world, and not for them only, but "for all who shall believe on Me through their word;" the whole Church to the end of time; for the unity of the Church—"that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in us,"—and twice over He gives the reason,—“that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” Lastly He prays for the future blessedness and glory of redeemed mankind in words of touching personal affection:—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold [and share] my glory, which Thou hast given me;" and twice over He does not pray for, but declares that God loves them as He has loved Himself:—"Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me," and again,—they are the concluding words of the prayer,—“That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

The discourse and prayer concluded, they "sang a hymn,"—probably the second part of the Passover Hallel, which concludes with the significant words:—

“ Bind the sacrifice with cords,
Even unto the horns of the altar.
Thou art my God, and I will praise thee.
Thou art my God, and I will exalt thee.
O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good,
And his mercy endureth for ever.”

Through the streets He led them, and out of the gate of the city, and down the steep hill side, over

the brook Kidron ; and it seems to have been during this walk that He warned them again, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." Peter again protested his fidelity :—"Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Jesus said unto him, "Verily, I say unto thee that this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." But he spake the more vehemently, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both unto prison and to death" (Luke). "Likewise also said they all" (Matt., Mark).

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PASSION.

THE scene is the garden, carpeted (being spring time) with grass and flowers, the olive trees with twisted trunks and pale green foliage, the paschal full moon, chequering the scene with silvery lights and luminous shadows. The time, near midnight.

The three Evangelists record the Agony in words which we shrink from paraphrasing.

“He took with him Peter and James and John,” leaving the others at the gate of the garden, “and began to be sore amazed and to be [sorrowful, Matt.] very heavy; and saith unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, tarry ye here and watch with me. And he went a little further [about a stone’s cast (Luke)], and kneeled down (Luke) and fell on his face on the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. And he said Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening

him. And being in an agony he prayed the more earnestly. And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (St. Luke).

"And he cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep [sleeping for sorrow (Mark)], and saith unto Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

"And again he went away and said, O my Father if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy, neither wist they what to answer him.

"And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

"Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray me."

We gaze with awe upon the outward symptoms of this spiritual "agony," the kneeling, the prostration, the restlessness, the repeated prayer, the bloody sweat, the supernatural aid. We reverently try to comprehend the mystery which we are permitted to witness.

First we note with profound interest the touching

evidence which it offers that our Lord was truly human, sharing even in the weaknesses of our frail nature ; in the clinging to human companionship, and seeking human sympathy in an hour of suffering and dread ; for we gather clearly from His own words that He took the three apostles not as witnesses of the agony only, as at the raising of Jairus's daughter or the transfiguration, but to support Him with their companionship ; He bade them " Watch *with me*," and His mournful reproach was, " Could ye not watch *with me* one hour ? " Again in the shrinking of the human will, we recognise an illustration of the true humanity of Jesus, with its true human will acting freely ;¹ and we note for our own comfort that the natural shrinking of our hearts from what is painful or appalling is not sinful ; provided it be accompanied as in Jesus, by a readiness nevertheless to suffer, and to do, all which is according to the Divine will. Yea, the obedience which fully recognises the suffering beforehand, and shrinks from it, and yet forces itself to obey, is the truest obedience, and the truest heroism.

But we recognise that this is not a mere shrinking from the passion and the death. The great antagonism of life against death, the repugnance of

¹ This place has always been recognised as affording one of the strongest arguments against the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies.

unfallen humanity from such a total contradiction of its nature, and such like theories, will not explain our Lord's dread and prayer and strife. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," "He began to be amazed and very heavy," express something more than this, deeper than this, different from this. They express an anxiety, an amazement at some unexpected horror, some abyss suddenly opening before Him ; the bloody sweat is the token of some tremendous mental conflict and endurance, beyond all ordinary human experience ; and this is proved again by the angelic aid which was given, because needed, to sustain His human nature in a trial too great for mere human endurance.

It was the horror of the sins of mankind then laid upon Him. As the high priest laid his hands on the head of the goat and so typically charged it with the sins of the whole people, so now before the blood of the Lamb of God was shed upon the altar of the cross, the sins for which His blood was to atone were laid upon him, "he hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah liii. 6).

We need not suppose, there is no reason for it except to accord with a certain theological hypothesis, that our Lord felt these imputed sins as the sinner feels them, with the sense of guilt and of alienation from God ; the prayers in which at the three intervals of the agony he addresses God as "My Father," and

expresses his entire resignation to His will, is enough to prove this. It may help us, perhaps, to understand it if we try to enter into the shrinking of one unaccustomed to it who is called upon to examine and handle loathsome wounds and sores in order to heal them ; or try to enter into the horror of a person charged, though innocent, with some great wickedness which he abhors. To have the sins of mankind brought to His consciousness ; to be made to realise them in all their foulness and impiety ; to be brought in some mysterious way into personal relation to them ; to have to take them upon Himself, though only for the purpose of making atonement for them ; may be enough to account for the dread, the prayer, the agony which we have witnessed.

When our Lord came to His disciples the third time He said, "Sleep on now and take your rest ;" we infer that the occasion in which He had desired their watchful sympathy was past ; the darkness and horror which had nearly overwhelmed His soul and forced from His body the bloodysweat, had passed away "It is enough" he continues, looking forward to the next fore-ordained and foreseen act of His passion, "Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Then the noise of a crowd is heard approaching ; the red glare of torches, blotting the silvery moonlight begins to shine upon the twisted olive trunks,

and upon the dim forms of an approaching crowd of men. He knows what it portends : " Rise, let us be going : behold he is at hand that doth betray me."

The Betrayal.

After having been permitted to gaze upon the Saviour of mankind, shrinking from the horrible burden of a world's sins, crushed under the weight, enabled to endure it only by angelic help, it is the more incumbent on us to dwell upon the next scene of the tragic history, in which amidst confusion and terror we shall see the Lord calm and self-possessed, dignified, and gracious ; conscious of overwhelming power ; proving it by throwing His enemies into powerless awe ; using it to work a miracle of healing on one of them ; and then allowing Himself to be seized, bound, and carried off, that the will of God might be fulfilled.

At the end of the last section we have seen how the midnight stillness of the moonlit garden was interrupted by the distant sounds of a crowd ; and how the Lord announced to the disciples the approach of His betrayal.

" And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves from the Chief Priests " and Scribes," (Mark) " and elders of the people" (Matthew) [a band, with lanterns and torches and weapons

(John)] ; a band of soldiers, whether part of the Roman temple guard, or of those in the service of the High Priest, to whom Pilate alludes afterwards, "Ye have a watch"; servants of the Chief Priests; a mixed crowd of gazing friends, (*e.g.*, the young man with the linen cloth) and enemies and curious idlers. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth" to meet them, "and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas, also, which betrayed him stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground" (John xviii. 4). Whether some sudden flash of the glorious majesty of the Son of Man was suffered to shine forth upon them, or some supernatural awe suddenly seized their minds, we are not told; or was it merely the natural effect of that moral majesty which on a former occasion, in lesser degree, had seized the minds of the officers sent to fetch Him before the Sanhedrim, when they came back without Him, saying "never man spake like this man?" We are only told the effect, not the cause; a sudden awe simultaneously struck the whole multitude, and they retreated a pace backward, and fell to the ground. Thus in the act of his surrender to them He proved even to themselves that they had no power over Him. Then after a moment's pause He asked again, "Whom seek ye?" They reply

again, "Jesus of Nazareth." "Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek me let these go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."

Then the awe seems to have passed away from them; it would be very natural if shame and anger at the momentary weakness which had overpowered them succeeded to it. Judas proceeded to fulfil his bargain; and, superfluous as it now was, to give the arranged signal, "He came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him," ["drew near unto Jesus to kiss him" (Mark)], the kiss which has become the type of treachery in all after ages; and Jesus said unto him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Mark.)

Then a scene of confusion ensued. The officers laid hands upon Him. "When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" And Peter drew the sword he carried, and smote one of those who had laid hands on his Master, Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, and cut off his right ear. Jesus appears to have disengaged Himself for a moment from the hands of those who held Him, saying, "Suffer ye thus far?" and then He touched the ear of the wounded man, and healed him; His last miracle—a miracle of healing on His enemy. Then Jesus turned to Peter and said unto him, Put up again thy sword

into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John.) "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt.) "And Jesus said to the multitude, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, to take me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and ye took me not. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Matthew, Mark). "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke).

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. St. Mark records an incident of the flight which helps to bring the haste and confusion graphically before us; one young man, who followed him with nothing but a linen cloth cast about his naked body, when they laid hold on him, left the linen cloth in their hands, and fled away naked. It has been conjectured that St. Mark, who relates the incident, was himself the subject of it.

The Trial.

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him," and led him back to the city, "and led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the High

Priest that same year.”¹ It has been suggested with considerable appearance of probability that Annas and Caiaphas, the father-in-law and son-in-law, so intimately connected in the high-priestly duties, inhabited different portions of the same great building

¹ There is some difficulty in understanding the official relations of Annas and Caiaphas. The subject has been dealt with in an earlier chapter, page 144. Annas had been appointed High Priest in his 37th year, after the battle of Actium, by Quirinus, the imperial governor of Syria, but was deposed by Valerius Gratus, the procurator of Judea, at the beginning of the reign of Tiberius, and Ismael was appointed in his place. Ismael in turn gave place to Eleazar, a son of Annas, who, after a year's tenure of the high office, was supplanted by Simon, and he, after another year, by Joseph Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, who continued to hold the office for near twenty years. But Annas seems still to have retained the title, and something of the power, of High Priest. In St. Luke's enumeration of the rulers at the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, we have seen that he puts the two together, “Annas and Caiaphas being High Priests” (Luke iii. 2). In Acts iv. 6 he calls “Annas the High Priest,” and names Caiaphas as the chief “of the kindred of the High Priest.” Here Matthew and John call Caiaphas the High Priest, but John says that they carried their prisoner first to Annas, and that he sent him on to Caiaphas. In times a little later than this we gather from the Jewish writers that the High Priest had a colleague who shared his labours, and on emergency could officiate for him; we have seen (p. 144) that there are some traces of a similar arrangement in earlier times; and it seems probable that Annas was the colleague of his son-in-law, and, from having himself been High Priest, from his domestic relation to Caiaphas, and from his force of character, retained an unusual degree of power and prestige.

which was the High Priest's official residence. It is disputed whether the preliminary examination took place before Annas or Caiaphas; we adopt the view that it took place before Annas.

Annas received the prisoner and began to question Him about "his disciples and his doctrine." It was not an official examination, but an informal, preliminary interrogation, in which Annas, no doubt, sought materials for the future formal trial. "He asked of his disciples and his doctrine,"—of His followers who had so lately brought Him in royal triumph into the city, and whose numbers were unknown; and of His doctrine, what He taught them; from which a conjecture might be formed what were His aims and plans. That the questions were not authoritative, that their tenor suggested a party and a plot, that their motive was to entangle him in his talk, will account for the tone of our Lord's reply. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said." I have no band of followers, I have no secret designs, I have always spoken openly, in synagogue and Temple, to all who frequented them; all who believe in me are my disciples, and all the world knows what I teach; why do you ask me?

All that I have said and done has been openly, you know it ; at the proper time your witnesses can testify it. I have nothing to reveal, and nothing to add. "Why do you ask me?" is one of those counter-questions with which Jesus was used to turn a man's thoughts inward upon himself, and make an appeal to his conscience. He declines to submit Himself to the irregular inquisition ; He contents Himself with declaring that His life and doctrine lie open to all men, and refers him to the testimony of others.

"One of the officers which stood by," considering the prisoner's answer wanting in respect, "struck Jesus in the face with the palm of his hand," an indignity rather than an injury, saying, "Answerest thou the High Priest so?" It was, perhaps, the first personal indignity which had been offered Him in all His life, for there was a certain meek dignity about Him which repelled familiarity, and compelled even from His enemies a certain respect. It was just the sudden insult which makes the blood rush into a man's head, and the angry word to his lips ; and while we shrink with horror at the outrage, we look with startled interest to see how the Lord will bear or answer it. "Jesus answered him" with meek dignity and calm rebuke, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

Annas has seen and heard enough to know that further interrogation will be useless, and he directs

Him to be taken, bound as He is, to Caiaphas. Caiaphas appears to have sent messengers to summon an immediate meeting of the Sanhedrim, and directed that in the meantime Jesus should be kept in custody.

At a very early hour, the members of the Sanhedrim, or many of them (for Joseph certainly, and Nicodemus probably, and perhaps others, were not there), came in answer to the High Priest's hasty summons to his palace, and there took their seats, and sent for Jesus, and for the witnesses who had been brought to give evidence against him. They had already prejudged the case. In former councils they had resolved that He must be destroyed as an act of policy, in order to avoid the risk of a popular insurrection, and the advantage which the Roman Emperor might take of the pretext to deprive them of the degree of liberty and self-government they still possessed. But the forms of a trial must be gone through. They had resolved to destroy Him by a judicial condemnation and execution. There was a certain show of fairness in the trial. Many false witnesses came and bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together, and was dismissed. At the last came two false witnesses, and one gave evidence that He had said, "I will destroy this Temple made with hands, and build another made without hands," while the other gave His words as, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to

build it in three days." We remember well the words which these witnesses had misunderstood and incorrectly repeated, and note this evidence that they had sunk into the minds of the hearers. But the Jewish law required that two witnesses, at least, should agree in their testimony, and on the want of agreement between these two witnesses this evidence also was dismissed, and the case seemed on the point of breaking down.

Then the High Priest rose and addressed Him, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But Jesus, who seems to have been silent throughout the examination of the witnesses, still "held his peace, and answered nothing";—the judge sought only to find some occasion out of His own admissions, and He declined, as before to Annas, to submit to the treacherous interrogatory. Not from contemptuous indifference to the details by which they arrive at a foregone conclusion, to which He is already resigned, for every passion in every human heart,—from the most blundering false witness to the High Priest, in whose heart a politic murder and the gift of prophecy are mysteriously conjoined—is of profound interest to Him who watched the workings of human passion towards the consummation of the great tragedy with grave, sorrowful, pitying¹ eyes.

¹ Stier, "The Words of the Lord Jesus."

Then, at length, the High Priest brings forward the thought which had been all the while in all minds as the real ground of their animosity, that He had sought to lead men to believe him to be the Christ, the Son of God. He himself lays this charge against Him.

“Art thou the Christ, tell us?”

And He said unto them, “If I tell you ye will not believe. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me nor release me” (John).

Then the High Priest made a solemn appeal to Him, which, as an obedient Jew, He could not refuse to answer:—

“I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God” (Matthew).

“Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said [I am, (Mark)]: hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Then the High Priest, with the conventional signs of horror, rent his clothes, and the rest of the Council no doubt joined in his demonstration. The High Priest and Council were the formal representatives of the Jewish nation. Good cause had they for rending their garments, and for any other expression of horror and woe, for this was their formal and conclusive rejection of the Messiah.

Taking advantage of the declaration he had thus

wrung from Jesus, the High Priest addressed the Council, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy. What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard His blasphemy; what think ye?"

And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." The trial was ended, and the sentence pronounced. But it was necessary to the fulfilment of their intentions to obtain the consent of the Procurator to the execution of the capital sentence. So Jesus was again remanded till the day had sufficiently advanced for them to wait upon the Roman Governor.

Meantime Jesus was left in the hands of the officers and servants of the High Priest, who, it would seem, took Him into the hall where the servants and idlers were; and there amused themselves by mocking and ill-treating the prisoner. They spat on Him in contempt and hatred of His pretensions as King-Messiah; they blindfolded Him, and struck Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?" in ridicule of His pretensions to be a prophet. They "smote him," and "spake blasphemously against him." Surely, the abstinence of the Gospels from all comment, here and throughout the scenes of the Passion, is very remarkable. But a little reflection tells us that comment would but detract from the solemn awe of the bare facts simply, briefly told. Very little reflection teaches us that in the meek majesty thus subjected to the thoughtless cruelty and coarse buffoonery of the

crowd is a picture of the patience of God, strong and patient, provoked every day by the thoughtless wickedness, the unintentional blasphemies, of men

Peter's Denial.

We have a pause, during which we have time to turn to the followers of Jesus.

When in the garden they all forsook him and fled ; yet Peter and John, having easily escaped in the crowd and confusion, continued to follow in the distance to see what would happen. When they arrived at the High Priest's palace, John, who was known to the High Priest, was allowed by the woman-servant who acted as porter, to enter with the rest. He probably stood with the rest, and heard the brief colloquy between Jesus and the High Priest, and then, when Jesus was remanded, he went to her that kept the door and asked admission for Peter, who meantime had been standing without.

Now the servants and officers had made a fire in the midst of the hall, for it was cold, and stood round it warming themselves, and Peter came and stood among them.

While Peter stood by the fire, the servant who had seen him enter came and "looked earnestly at him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know Him not." And he went away from the fire, and stood in the porch,

where another maid saw him, and said to them that stood by, This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth; and he said, I know not the man. One of the servants of the High Priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? Peter then denied Him again. He seems to have got out of their dangerous neighbourhood, by going to another part of the hall; but there also, "about one hour after, they that stood by said, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew."

And the Lord, from the midst of the servants who were ill-treating Him, turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

The Trial before Pilate.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, or Governor, of Judea, ordinarily resided at the new city of Cæsarea, which Herod the Great had founded by the sea, but it was the custom of the Governors to come up to Jerusalem at the great feasts with a considerable military force as an addition to the garrison, in order to prevent any outbreak among the multitudes of

pilgrims assembled there, excited by religious enthusiasm. His official residence in the capital was the palace of Herod in the Upper City.

Thither then, at the very early hour at which, in those Eastern countries, the business of the day begins, the Jewish magnates brought Jesus, and stopping in the portico of the palace, because they could not enter into a Gentile house without incurring that amount of ceremonial defilement which would have prevented them from sharing in the solemnities of the Festival, they sent word to Pilate, who came out to them. Probably the portable official chair,—“the judgment seat,”—which was carried about with a Roman magistrate, was brought out, and he sat down in it on the marble pavement of the portico, thus elevated by its steps above the level of the crowd. They seem to have thought that Pilate would have given sentence upon their condemnation, without instituting any independent inquiry. A single glance at the prisoner standing there bound among them would be enough to show that it was not an ordinary criminal whose execution they sought; and this may account for Pilate’s unexpected inquiry, “What accusation bring ye against this man?” They answered in a way to show their resentment, “If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” Pilate replied at once in a similar tone, “Take ye him and judge him according to your

law," *i.e.*, you have your own laws, with which I do not desire to interfere; if you have tried and condemned him, execute also your own sentence; but if you seek a sentence from me I have the right to inquire first into the charge against Him.

They replied:—"We have found him guilty and deserving of the punishment of death, but it is not lawful for us to put any man to death, therefore we bring him to thee" (John); and, finding that Pilate would do nothing without hearing the charge, "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" (Luke).

Pilate, they knew, would care very little about the religious aspect of the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, or the Son of God, therefore they presented to him the political side of it, and accused Jesus of setting himself up as King; and though He had evaded the snare which they set for Him when they asked Him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, yet they now falsely asserted that He had given the answer they hoped He would have given; and they asserted it as if Christ had gone about in a seditious spirit, forbidding the people to continue to pay their tribute to the Emperor, and claiming their allegiance and tribute to Himself. This was a serious charge among a people like the Jews, bearing

uneasily the yoke of their foreign master, and frequently breaking out into insurrection against it.

Pilate at once went into his judgment hall with his own attendants, leaving the Jews standing without in the portico, and interrogated the prisoner :—

“Art thou the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” The counter question seems to ask the sense in which Pilate uses the phrase—in his own sense as a pretender to temporal dominion and the opponent of the Roman power in Judea, or in the sense in which He had Himself put His claim to the Messiahship before the people, which no doubt had been made known to the Governor. And this will give the corresponding meaning to Pilate’s answer :—

“Am I a Jew?” I ask not as a Jew inquiring about his prophesied Messiah ; I ask as the Roman Procurator inquiring into a charge of sedition :—

“Thine own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered thee unto me,” which made it unlikely that His claims were merely theological claims, such as His own nation and its religious chiefs might be expected to sympathise with ; therefore he puts the plain question, leaving opinions and distinctions aside,—“What hast thou done?”

Our Lord’s reply is full and explanatory :—

“My kingdom is not of this world.” He implies that He is a King, but not in the sense in which

Pilate has defined the question. And in reply to the question of fact, "What hast thou done?" He goes to the very point of it when He adds, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews," but I have done no act of sedition, and have not used force against the machinations of my enemies; "therefore," He repeats, not in mere repetition, "My kingdom is not from hence." He has answered Pilate's question that He claims not such a kingdom as Pilate defines, but maintains that there is another Kingdom, more wide-spreading than Rome's universal dominion, more enduring, more thorough; not an earthly but a heavenly sovereignty, and over that kingdom He,—who stands there a prisoner at the bar of Pilate,—is King.

Pilate, noting the claim implied in this answer, pushes the question,—“Art thou a king, then?” And the Lord replies distinctly, “Thou sayest that I am a king” (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). The importance of this distinct claim is marked by the fact that the synoptical Gospels which omit the previous conversation which led up to it, all record this important fact—that as Jesus before the Sanhedrim clearly claimed to be the Son of God, so before Pilate He as distinctly claimed to be the King of the kingdom “not of this world,”—the “stone cut out without hands,”—the last great kingdom of Daniel's prophecy.

Jesus continues :—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." This is not a mere continuation of His defence, a mere assertion of the truth of His answer to Pilate's question: a very little attention is enough to detect something much deeper than this. He had just spoken of His kingdom as not from hence; whence, then, was it? And now He speaks not only of being born, but also,—for it is no mere tautology,—of coming into the world; whence, then, did He come?

According to our Lord's usual method of overpassing, or even putting altogether aside the special topic, in order to speak to the heart and conscience of those to whom He spoke, so now He passes away from the subject of examination; He has satisfied the Governor's inquisition, now He applies to the man's heart; He has asserted His heavenly sovereignty, He seeks a disciple of His kingdom in Pilate. He presents the subject in His usual tentative, enigmatical way, seeking to kindle and encourage thought, inquiry, faith. The emperor's Procurator, in so difficult a government as that of Judea, must have been a statesman of considerable capacity, like most of his compeers, having no religious faith. From his position, impressed with the grandeur of the imperial power, and anxious,

above all things, to retain the imperial favour. The Lord presented before this man's intellect and conscience that there was another world besides this, a kingdom sublimer than the empire, a power greater than Cæsar's. He offered Himself and His claims to his faith. He declared Himself to have come into the world, the King of this sublimer Kingdom, the revealer of "the Truth," and He distinctly offered him this truth and claimed his attention to it. Surely it is sublime to see the prisoner thus presenting himself to His judge,—to see Jesus seeking to win Pilate.

We may, with great probability, suppose Pilate to have been in the condition of philosophic doubt which was common among the educated Romans of his age, and it is with the spirit of a man who is weary of the philosophers and their opposing systems, and incredulous of Eastern theologians, that he gives his famous reply:—"What is Truth?" No one can tell, is what he means,—not knowing that it stood before him, and offered itself to his acceptance.

But though the Governor will not stay to hear a thesis on truth from this Jewish enthusiast, at least he is quite convinced that there is nothing to be feared from Him. Accordingly, he went out again to the portico, Jesus accompanying him, and "said to the Chief Priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man."

Whereupon "the chief priests accused him of many things, but he answered nothing." Then said Pilate unto Him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? Answerest thou nothing? But Jesus yet answered nothing." Pilate had declared Him innocent: He needed not to speak; "so that Pilate marvelled greatly" (Matt., Mark). "And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke).

Pilate caught at the last statement, and saw in it a way out of his difficulty. He asked if the prisoner were a Galilean, and as soon as he knew that He was, and therefore was Herod's subject, and belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent them and their prisoner to lay their complaint before Herod, "who was at that time in Jerusalem," having no doubt come up to the Feast.

Before Herod.

Herod Antipas, being a Jew, came up to Jerusalem for the great Feasts. Some passages of Josephus¹ help us to picture to ourselves the state with which he journeyed through the country, among the humbler pilgrims, "splendidly adorned," with his "lords, high

¹ "Antiquities," Book XIII., chap. xi.; "Wars," Book II., chap. xvii.

captains, and chief estates of Galilee," followed by an escort. He had, no doubt, a palace in Jerusalem where he resided at the Feasts ; and another passage of Josephus indicates that when he went up to the Temple he would go thither " in a pompous manner, [*i.e.*, in procession], adorned with royal garments," surrounded by his courtiers, "and with his followers with him in their armour."¹

There had been some quarrel and coolness between the Judean Procurator and the Galilean Tetrarch, and Herod took it as a conciliatory overture and an *amende*, when Pilate sent this Galilean prisoner to him, and sent the Sanhedrim to plead their cause before him.

Herod knew who Jesus was. He was connected with a passage in Herod's life to which he could not look back without a troubled mind. He had believed in John the Baptist, and heard him gladly, and did many things in obedience to his teaching ; and had reluctantly put him to death, entangled by his rash

¹ Herod the Great had, besides his body guard, a band of Thracians, another of Germans, another of Galatians, all in the habit and arms of their country, besides the main body of his army (Josephus, "Antiquities," Bk. xvii., chap. viii.). Philip the Tetrarch had a troop of Babylonian horsemen for his guard (*Ibid.* Bk. xvii., chap. ii.).

² Perhaps in consequence of Pilate's massacre of some of Herod's subjects at a former feast (Luke xiii. 1).

oath. This was He of whom he had heard soon after the Baptist's death, as teaching and working miracles, and he had for a moment thought it was the murdered John come to life again. He had learned since that it was not John, but that John had declared Him to be the expected Messiah; and for these two or three years He had heard of His rising fame, but had never seen Him.

He was glad of this opportunity. "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." He is not prepared to listen to Christ in the spirit in which he listened to John. Years of vice have deadened his soul to good impressions. His motive for wishing to see Jesus for a long time, and his satisfaction at seeing him now, is nothing but idle wonderment.

And when He was brought before him, "he questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing. And the Chief Priests and Scribes stood and vehemently accused him," but He answered nothing. It becomes clear that these silences of Jesus, so markedly recorded, are very significant. As we ponder their meaning we recognise that these silences are awful. They do not arise from a feeling of human scorn, though that may not be altogether absent from their complex meaning. We observe

that the accusations brought against Him before the Sanhedrim, and before Herod, seem to fail without any answer. We observe that He seems to decline to defend Himself, except in His explanation to Pilate. But his silence in the other cases seems to convey a condemnation of him to whom He will not speak. He would argue with the Jews on the subject of His claim to be the Son of God so long as there was a hope of convincing them, but He refused to wrangle with the Sanhedrim, which had resolved to murder Him. He would explain to Pilate, who honestly sought explanation ; He refused to speak to Herod, who, notwithstanding his knowledge of the Baptist and his teaching, now regarded the Messiah only with the idle curiosity with which one regards any one who has attained a certain notoriety, and wanted to see a miracle, as he would a conjuring trick. It was not scorn or indignation ; it was the blank inactivity to which grace is reduced in presence of a hardened human will. "Ephraim is given to idols—*let him alone.*"

Finding that Jesus refused to gratify his curiosity by word or deed, Herod found nothing in the vehement accusations of the Chief Priests and Scribes which seemed to him to call for judicial notice. It is clear that the accusation that He claimed to be King of the Jews had also been raised before Herod, as likely to rouse his jealousy now, as it had done,

thirty years before, that of his father Herod the Great; but Herod could not be made to see anything serious or dangerous in such shadowy pretensions. He contented himself with contemptuous mockery. Herod, with his men of war, "set Him at nought and mocked Him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe"—some faded robe of white, the Royal colour, gorgeous, perhaps, with tarnished broidery—and so sent Him back, in mock state, to Pilate.

Before Pilate again.

Then Pilate saw his prisoner brought back to him from Herod, and the responsibility of dealing with Him forced upon him.

What was it in Jesus which so strangely impressed the soul of the harsh, imperious Procurator? We suppose it was entirely His appearance. His natural dignity and gracious bearing, the intellectual genius and elevation of moral character which must have had their outward expression in His face, would not be lost on one accustomed, like a Roman statesman, to measure men. But added to this was the present bearing and expression which indicated what was now the moral attitude of the man. No fear of His clamorous accusers, no deprecating appeal to the Governor, were apparent, but a calm, dignified self-possession. No scorn of the baseness which was hounding Him to an undeserved death, no stern defiance of the Roman who held His fate in his hands.

Not the ecstasy of a martyr, lost to what is around him because his thoughts are already in another world, not the Stoicism of the philosopher, but the grave pity as of a superior being, regarding, from his safe height, the passions, the errors, the sins of the actors in the human tragedy. Nay, more, a kind of strange, yearning look of love glancing over the multitude who clamoured for His death ; and a strange, searching glance, as of one who read men's hearts, appealing to all which was best and noblest in His own. This, we suppose, it was which it takes so long to describe, but which his practised eye read at a second glance,—this it was, we suppose, which so impressed the mind of Pilate.

Pilate summoned the Chief Priests and the rulers and the people, and made a short address to them, as they stood gathered about the portico of his palace : “ Ye have brought this 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 you to him, and lo ! nothing worthy of death is done unto him.” “ But ye have a custom that I should release unto you a prisoner at the Passover, will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews ? ” His appeal was to the people, over the heads, as it were, of the Jewish authorities, for he recognised that “ the Chief Priests had delivered him for envy.” But the Chief Priests

raised a cry, and which was taken up in the crowd, demanding the release of Barabbas, who, for a certain sedition in the city, accompanied by murder, had been cast into prison. Pilate put the question again to the people, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" They cried with greater unanimity, "Barabbas!" "Pilate saith, What, then, shall I do with Jesus, which is called the Christ?" and some one raised the ominous cry, Let him be crucified! "Why," asks Pilate, "what evil hath he done?" but again the cry was caught up and repeated by the crowd,¹ "Crucify him! crucify him! And again he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him." And then he proposes a compromise, "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go"; but they continued to cry, incessantly and loudly, that He might be crucified.

Pilate had taken a strange interest in this re-

¹ It is a common-place to illustrate the fickleness of men by pointing to the crowd which cried Hosannah! on Sunday and Crucify Him! on Friday. But the illustration is untenable. It was not the same crowd. On Sunday it was a crowd who came up with Him to Jerusalem, who knew Him and His words and works; and they were headed by the twelve Apostles. And those who came out from Jerusalem to meet Him were disciples. But on Friday it was the vast crowd of strangers from all parts of the world, who did not know Him, and who not unnaturally accepted the judgment of the Chief Priests, and rulers, and Pharisees, and re-echoed their demands on Pilate.

markable person, and still laboured to save Him by a dramatic incident which should protest his own conviction of His innocence, and alarm the conscience of the people by throwing the guilt of His death upon them. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he sent for water and washed his hands before them, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." And, no doubt, once more the Chief Priests and rulers led the answer which the crowd adopted and repeated, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

It was probably during this interval that a message came from Pilate's wife. Tradition, which has probability on its side, says that she, like so many of the Gentile women who had been brought under the influence of the Jewish religion, was herself a proselyte of the gate. Her message was, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." But Pilate still temporised. He commanded Barabbas to be released, and he commanded that Jesus should be scourged.

Then the soldiers took Him into the great hall of the palace, which was called the Prætorium, and stripped him of His raiment and scourged Him; then, in brutal mockery of the meek prisoner, they threw one of their old military cloaks over His shoulders for a royal robe, for their regiment bore the name of the

Augustan regiment, and wore cloaks of the imperial purple, they plaited a wreath of thorns, and put it about His sacred temples for a mock crown, and put a reed in His bound hands for a sceptre, and mocked Him, bending the knee before Him, and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then, one more brutal than the rest ended the sport by spitting upon Him, and snatching the mock sceptre out of His hands, smote Him with it on the head.

Pilate seems to have been sitting in the Prætorium, and the pitifulness of the sight seems to have suggested to his mind another appeal to the people. He went out again into the portico, and said, "Behold, I bring him forth that ye may see that I find no fault in him," and as he spoke Jesus was led forth by the soldiers wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate called their attention to the pathetic sight, "Behold the man!" Pallid, soiled, blood-stained, clad in the ragged purple cloak, and crowned with thorns, but with His calm, dignified self-possession unshaken, the look of yearning pity and forgiving love unchanged. Probably it was a double appeal, to the better sense of the Chief Priests, Is this a man whose pretensions you need fear? and to the natural compassion of the people at so pathetic a sight. But the sight of its victim only maddens hate, and "when the Chief Priests and officers saw Him they cried out, saying, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'

The appeal to the people would seem to have been successful, they were silent. Pilate, therefore, saith unto them, 'Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in Him.'"

Then the rulers in explanation to Pilate of their persistency in desiring His death, and in defence of it to the now wavering multitude, brought forth the charge which they had hitherto kept in the background "By our law he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God."

"When Pilate heard that saying he was the more afraid." Superstition is the Nemesis which pursues unbelief. Pilate was familiar enough with the sons of the gods, the demi-gods and heroes of the classical mythology, and naturally the words would convey to him some similar meaning now.

Pilate had been struck, perplexed, moved by this remarkable person, and could not explain his feelings to himself; his wife's account of her dream; all prepared him for something unusual; and when he heard that this strange man claimed to be the Son of God he was prepared to entertain the idea that there was something supernatural about Him. His was the very aspect a suffering God might bear. He returned once more into the judgment hall taking Jesus with him and asked Him "Whence art thou?" But Jesus gave him no answer. An answer to this question, born of superstition, could lead to no useful

result. Pilate had already passed the crisis of his trial. Had he stood firm against the clamour of the people, and refused to allow an innocent man to suffer, it might have been the turning-point in his evil career, and have led him on from strength to strength. But in temporising, in trying by unjust compliances to conciliate the crowd, in condemning Jesus to be scourged, and allowing Him to be further mocked and tortured, he had failed in his trial, and would fail again. Then he said, "Speakest thou not unto me. Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee? Then Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." God has power to release me; thou who boastest of thy power hast allowed it to be taken out of thy hands by the Chief Priests; thy sin is not so great as that of those who have delivered me into thy hands.

Then Pilate seems again to have brought Him out and to have tried to induce the Jewish leaders to forego their intentions, but the Jews (*i.e.*, the rulers) cried out saying, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Then Pilate brought him out again and sat down in his judgment seat, and made a final appeal to them, "Behold your king." What can such a king do against the power of Cæsar, a king who declares Himself that He only claims to be

a king in some religious, transcendental sense which involves no opposition, no disloyalty to Cæsar. But they replied only with clamours, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" "What," says Pilate, "shall I crucify your king?" The Chief Priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar."

Pilate saw clearly the covert threat, that if he let this man go who claimed to be king of the Jews, especially if any such popular tumults arose about Him as the Jewish authorities feared, he might incur the suspicion of the suspicious and jealous Tiberius; and that the Jewish authorities would exonerate themselves by stating the fact that when they themselves had arrested this pretender and delivered Him up to the Procurator, and demanded His execution as necessary to the public tranquillity, Pilate had refused to listen to them, and had released Him.

It was easy for Pilate to exert his power and influence on behalf of this innocent person, but he was not the man to risk his own interests for the sake of protecting another person ever so innocent and ever so interesting: "Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away."

There were two other prisoners awaiting execution by the common Roman method of the cross. The centurion in charge of the three prisoners proceeded to the execution of their sentence. A guard of soldiers

fall in ; some precede the criminals ; they according to the custom take up each his cross to bear it on their shoulders, as criminals in later days go to the gallows with the halter round their necks ; other soldiers close the procession, and thus they proceed through the streets, and out of the city gate, towards the hill of Calvary, the common place of execution. And on the way Jesus, worn out with suffering, could no longer bear the burden of his cross, and a man coming towards the city just then meeting them, the soldiers laid hold of him and imposed upon him the disagreeable task of bearing the cross to Calvary. The man was Simon the Cyrenian, himself afterwards a Christian, and the father of two well-known Christians, Alexander and Rufus. A crowd of people followed, among them a number of women, who, struck with natural compassion for the gentle, dignified, uncomplaining sufferer, bewailed and lamented him. "The sacred narrative has no record of any woman's enmity against the Redeemer." It was not the women who had followed him from Galilee, it was not strangers who had come up to the feast, it was women of Jerusalem. They probably knew something of His pretensions and of His character, and without being believers, even though disbelievers, the present suffering, and the cruel fate of the "gentle enthusiast" moved their natural womanly compassion, and they showed it in

expressions of pity and sympathy. The incident is remarkable for the reply which Jesus made. His human heart is touched by the sympathy, and He responds to it, and the tenor of His reply shows how even at such a time under such circumstances, His heart was full not of indignation with others, or of self pity, but full of sorrow for the misery of the people which thus rejected Him: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming," during the dreadful miseries of the siege by the Romans, "when they shall say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the rocks, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree what shall be done in the dry," *i.e.*, if such things are done to me, green with the sap of grace and fruitful in all righteousness, what things will be done to this people from whom the sap of God's grace is departing, who are drying up root and branch, and becoming fit fuel for the consuming judgments of God?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS.

HE last Seven Words of our Blessed Lord upon the Cross have always afforded special subject for devout meditation. No doubt these sayings were naturally called forth by the occasion; and so, remembering what the occasion was, they demand the most reverent and loving regard. But we shall soon find reason to regard them as having a wider scope and profounder meaning than that which satisfies the immediate occasion. We shall find reason to regard them, not merely as the natural ejaculations of the dying Son of Man, but as also the solemn utterances of the Son of God; uttered while in the act of accomplishing the atoning sacrifice, and deriving deeper meanings from their reference to the great transaction. God forbid that we should put meanings into the words other than, and beyond those, which the Lord intended; but let us take care that the deeper meanings which the Lord did intend do not escape us.

The First Word.

“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary [Golgotha], there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke xxiii. 33).

The soldiers stripped Him of His clothes, stretched His body upon the cross as it lay upon the ground, and nailed Him to it with great nails, tearing through the delicate network of nerves in hands and feet. The “title of his accusation”—the nature of the crime for which He had been condemned—written on a scroll in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin,—was nailed to the cross above His head. A soldier put upon His head in mockery the crown of thorns with which they had crowned Him in the Prætorium. The cross was raised, and planted, with jolt and jerk, into the place in the ground prepared for it, and fastened in its place.

“*Then* said Jesus” would seem to imply that it was when the crucifixion was finished that He uttered the words, “Father, forgive them.” “Father!” Later He addresses Him, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But here it is “Father.” It is He who is Son of God as to His human nature, and eternal, only-begotten Son of God as to His divine

nature, the human nature and the divine nature constituting the one Christ, who thus addresses the eternal Father, with entire confidence that He would be heard; as when at the grave of Lazarus he said, "I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people that stood by I said it."

"Father, *Forgive.*" The Victim is laid upon the altar; "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The precious Blood already issues forth into the sacred hands; those priestly hands are stretched out as if in supplication, He looks up to heaven, and His words are the appropriate expression of the great Act which is being accomplished,— "Father, forgive." Isaiah truly said (liiii. 12),—

"He hath poured out His soul unto death. He was numbered with the transgressors. He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

"Forgive *them.*" Forgive whom? The answer to that question needs careful thought.

"Them." The soldiers, who had just finished their cruel work? Yes, but they were only the human instruments who carried out the order of their superior officer. Pilate, who gave them their orders, was really responsible rather than they. But Pilate would have released Him, had he not been goaded by the covert threats of the Jewish rulers, and hounded on by the clamorous cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him! CRUCIFY HIM!" Nay, we must go further yet, all these

were but in various degrees, instruments of a greater power behind them. The sins of men—they were the real cause of the death of the Saviour:—

“ He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all ” (Is. liii.).

It is soberly true that every man’s sins,—your sins and mine,—had a share in causing the passion and death of the Lord. Nothing could make this clearer than the assurance of the apostle (Heb. vi. 6), that when now we sin “ we crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.” In all that protracted tragedy of blows, insults, torture, and death,—in all that previous ignominy of betrayal, denial, and coward flight,—in all those deeper sufferings which are indicated by the bloody sweat in the garden, and the cry of anguish on the cross,—of all these things, it is soberly and sadly true, you and I have a share in the guilt.

“ They know not what they do.” No doubt that is literally true; and it is the plea which mitigates the unspeakable horror of that which they did. The apostle Peter afterwards makes the same excuse for them: “ Ye did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers ” (Acts iii. 17). And Paul says, had they known it, “ they would not have crucified the Lord of glory ” (1 Cor. ii. 8). But they were not without

sin in what they knowingly did. The chief priests delivered Him for envy ; Pilate surrendered a man he judged innocent to the clamour of the mob and his own selfish fears ; the soldiers treated with gratuitous cruelty one whose innocence and meek dignity should have moved even their hard hearts to compassion.

Let us beware, for in doing any evil we know not how great the evil is which we do. Let us beware, for we are warned that our faults do "grieve the Spirit," that our sins do "crucify the Son of God afresh," that the scandal of our inconsistent character and conduct "put Christ to open shame."

"Father, forgive them."

Let us thank Him for the intercession thus begun, and carried on day by day, in which He pleads the precious blood for the forgiveness of penitent sinners. Let us be sure that God "heareth the Son always." If we are penitent, let us come and throw ourselves upon our knees before Him, and obtain His all-prevailing intercession, and be sure that we rise with the gracious pardon, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee"; and with the solemn warning "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee."

Let us treasure in our hearts the proof these gracious words give us of the love of Christ. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," says Solomon (Cant. viii. 7). All the waters of man's sins did not quench the Divine love

of man ; the floods of his ingratitude could not drown it. In the first agony of His torture, rejoicing in the blood-bought right of interceding, He interceded for His murderers.

And Christians must be of Christ's spirit. True Christians are. But a little while afterwards, we find the first martyr, Stephen, with the same divine love and patience, praying for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And *we* must pardon those who injure us ever so undeservedly, ever so bitterly, ever so ungratefully. Christ seeks to win us to this spirit by His example ; we are to "Love one another, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us." But failing to win us to forgiveness by example, He enforces it by a solemn threat,—“Except ye forgive every one his brother their trespasses neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”

Let us lay down our hatreds at the foot of Christ's cross, and forgive that we may be forgiven.

The Second Word.

It was the duty of the soldiers, having crucified the condemned, to keep guard over them until the slow torture had completed its work. Accordingly, they cleared away the spectators for a little space about the crosses for their place of guard. They proceeded first to share among themselves the garments of the criminals, which formed the perquisites of the execu-

tioners. His other garments "they parted into four parts, to every soldier a part," but His tunic "was without seam, woven from the top throughout"; clearly a handsome garment, the costly gift of the same spirit of devotion which had thought the alabaster box of very precious ointment not too costly an offering. The soldiers thought it a pity to mar it, so "they cast lots for it, whose it should be."

"And the people stood beholding." The Chief Priests and rulers and Scribes and elders had allowed their hatred to get the better of their sense of decorum, and had followed with the crowd to the place of execution. And they condescended to mock Him as He hung upon the cross, and the spectators joined them; and the passengers who were coming into and out of the city by the high road, a few yards off, paused for a few moments to see the spectacle, and they too joined in the chorus of derision. "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him now deliver him if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God."

And the soldiers also mocked Him, saying, "If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself."

And the robbers also, which were crucified with

Him, added a touch of horror to the scene, by joining in the mockery of the Innocent One who hung between them. "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us."

It was a repetition of the threefold challenge of the Temptation, "If thou be the Son of God" prove it by a miracle wrought on thy own behalf. Our Lord did not answer by a word.

We infer, from the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark, that at first both the robbers joined in the horrid mockery of their fellow-sufferer; and from St. Luke that it was after some interval that the second robber came to a better mind, and rebuked his fellow, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation. And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then, turning to Jesus, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Matt. xxvii. 44; Mark xv. 32; Luke xxiii. 39-43).

What a contrast between the unbelief of the Jews and the faith of this robber! Our Lord might again have said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The disciples themselves had abandoned the hope "that this was he which should have restored again the kingdom to Israel." This robber shows

a confidence which, considering the circumstances,—that he who prayed hung dying on the cross, and He to whom he prayed was dying on the cross beside him—was sublime. Certainly, the three greatest examples of faith in the Gospels are the Syro-Phœnician woman, the centurion of Capernaum, and the “good thief.”

We know nothing of the previous history of this man, except that he had been a robber, a man of violence, who had (according to his own confession) in his cruel death only received the due reward of his deeds. But his fear of God, his admission of the justice of his sentence, his rebuke of his fellow, are all indications of a man not ignorant of God, not without religious feelings, not without some traits of generosity and nobleness of character. But the most striking evidence of a remarkable character is that he recognised moral excellence and true grandeur in a man dying a felon’s death, and believed in Him whom all the rest of the world had hounded—or abandoned—to His fate.

As to the cause of the wonderful impression so suddenly made upon him, the near approach of death does often clear away the mists of passion which have clouded a man’s better nature, and enables him to take a juster estimate of things. We will venture, therefore, to conjecture that the sight of Jesus on the cross, the hearing of His words,—though they were only the

first brief words which we have been considering,—wrought this change in the robber's estimate of his fellow-sufferer. There are stories of the times of persecution, of the judge on his tribunal being converted by the Christian's behaviour under torture; of the executioner throwing down his sword, and declaring himself a convert, and joyfully sharing the martyrdom he should have inflicted. The one meek suffering face among a crowd of faces made diabolical by angry passions; the persistent patience in the midst of torture; the gentle dignity which shines out amidst circumstances of degradation; the kind of unearthly light in the eyes and the whole expression; these have a pathos and power which have many a time gone straight and all-powerful to the heart of a calm and thoughtful spectator. Thoughts of God, feelings of repentance, were already at work in the robber's heart. Did it need more than the sight of the Divine Martyr, and the grace of God, to touch the heart of this robber, this man of strong impulses for good and evil?

Let *us* try to realise with the eye of faith this same heart-touching sight, that by God's grace our hearts may be suffused with a rush of tender penitence, and sympathy, and love, and trust.

“To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” The crucified usually lingered about three days and

nights before their dreadful torture terminated in welcome death. Jesus calmly looks into the future and knows that this will not be His fate. To-day He Himself shall be released from suffering, and shall have entered the place of the blest departed. And He who hangs nailed hand and foot to the cross, calmly promises salvation to the dying robber. "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The calm confidence with which He takes for granted His own power, and the authority with which He disposes of life and death and Paradise, are very characteristic. He makes of Calvary a judgment-hall, and of the cross a throne.

This is His reply to the taunt "If thou be the Son of God save thyself," "If thou be the Son of God save thyself and us."

The penitent thief spoke no more, but he lived on for three hours; a short time measured by the dial, but how long in the events which it witnessed! Events how efficacious in the growth and ripening of a soul! He lived but three hours, but long enough to hear the gracious words to His mother and His beloved disciple; long enough to pass through the supernatural darkness which had so great an effect on all who experienced it; long enough to hear the bitter cry; long enough to see the light return; to hear the Lord declare His work finished; and commend His spirit to the Father.

Let us beware, for ourselves and others, that this example of the penitent robber, believing on his hard death-bed, pardoned at the last hour, be not perverted ; and we harden our hearts in sin, in a vain confidence that we have only at last to say, "Lord, remember me," to be forgiven and saved. He believed on Christ when he saw Him, and was saved. We have seen Christ a thousand times, and heard His teaching, and seen His miracles ; if we have not already been saved by that sight, our case is not that of the penitent robber, it is rather that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who saw and heard, and rejected Him, and perished in their sins.

Let us beware how we take the case of the penitent thief as an encouragement to hope for any miracle of mercy to ourselves at the eleventh hour. We do not know all the circumstances of his case. This we do know that our case cannot be the same as his. "The Scripture has told us of one man who was saved at the eleventh hour that none should despair, only of one that we should not presume."

Let us so repent of our sins now, and believe in Christ now, and commend ourselves to Him now, and live to Him now and always ; that when the end of our life shall come,—and we may pray, with holy Bishop Andrewes, that it may come without shame and pain,—we may have the blessed assurance

“To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,” the waiting-place of the saints of God, through which our Lord has passed ; and that when He shall come again at the last great day, we may go back with him to Heaven, there to be with Him for evermore. “Lord, Remember me.”

The Third Word.

The women who had followed Him from Galilee, and had followed afar off to Calvary, had gradually made their way through the crowd of spectators and reached the margin of the little space which the soldiers kept clear around the cross.

It is very characteristic of our human nature that when Peter’s impulsive zeal had denied his Lord, and Thomas’s dogged fidelity had forsaken Him, and all had fled and left Him to His fate, it was a group of loving women who had the courage to stand beside His cross ; yes, and the youngest Apostle “whom Jesus loved” with them, for love is stronger than zeal, stronger than fidelity, stronger than death !

St. John (xix. 25, 26, 27), tells us,—

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

“When, therefore, Jesus saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son.

“Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”

We look back three-and-thirty years to the mountain village of Galilee, and call to mind the sweet story of the pure and thoughtful maiden, chosen by God out of daughters of the line of David, for the unique honour of being the mother of the Messiah.

For thirty years they had lived,—the mother and the Son,—in undivided companionship. We try to imagine what effect upon the development of the character of that holy and thoughtful maiden, the companionship of such a son must have had. For the three years of His ministry she, with other holy women who were His disciples, had followed His fortunes, as the twelve apostles did ; and His mother, together with them, witnessed the continual manifestation of His power and wisdom ; and she was brought, like the rest, to recognise the truth, to which Peter gave utterance in the name of all, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But if this was a stupendous truth to the others, what was it to her, who was His mother ?

Simeon’s prophecy had come to pass : “A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” She has the courage and self-control to stand by the cross, gazing upon the sufferings she is not allowed to alleviate. Amazed, perhaps, and perplexed like the rest ; anguished beyond the rest.

The Lord calmly surveys the scene, and, as His eye sought out Peter’s in the judgment-hall, so now

He meets the eyes which gaze upon Him with a depth of awestruck inquiry and mute appeal, "and having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He knows what approaches, the three hours' darkness, the mental conflict, the expiring cry. He would spare His mother the sight of His last sufferings; He would be alone with His task! alone with God!

So, He takes farewell of His mother; He commits her to the filial care of the disciple who so often describes himself, as the highest honour and dearest happiness of his life, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"; "Woman, behold thy Son; Son, behold thy mother." "And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home," and was a son to her. She obeyed His wish, and meekly left Him in His dying hour; for she too had learned the lesson, "Not my will, but thine be done."

The incident recalls us to the reflection that our Lord was human as well as divine. At first, indeed, we saw Him human, when they crucified Him. But then He bore Himself so royally, so divinely, on the cross, that we saw only the Son of God, Intercessor, Dispenser of Salvation. Now again we are reminded that He was truly human, had the natural affections of human kind, acknowledged the claims of natural duty and personal affection.

We learn that the ties of relationship are sacred,

the claims of personal friendship sanctioned and sanctified. He sanctifies anew the first commandment of the second Table, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

The Fourth Word.

Three hours had passed, the sun had shone down on the spectators, and on the bare bodies of the crucified; and the shadow of the cross, slowly turning, had marked the weary hours. Noon had come. He had not come down from the cross; and God had not interfered to save Him. But at noon a portent happened, a miraculous¹ darkness came over the scene, which continued for another three long hours.

Like the Egyptian darkness, it must have filled all with awe. We should suppose that it was accompanied by a silence as awful. No man moved from his place, no man spoke to his fellow, they expected something to follow; they listened intently, and heard nothing but the slight rustle of involuntary movement in the crowd, or the sigh of pain or exhaustion from the cross.

The meaning of the portent, like most of God's language, is manifold. They had asked more than once in past times for a sign from heaven; they had now challenged God's interposition; and this

¹ Since it was Passover time the moon was near the full, it could not therefore have been an eclipse.

supernatural darkness was a sign to them from heaven by which God signified His displeasure at their deed. It had another meaning also, the sun's darkness was symbolical of the darkness which came over the soul of the sufferer.

As at Gethsemane, so now again, some darkness of spiritual horror, necessary to the complete endurance of the burden of sin and its atonement, came over His soul. We gather its nature from His subsequent Word ; it seems to have consisted in a sense of abandonment by God.

Rejected by the people, betrayed by one of His chosen twelve, abandoned by the rest ; mocked, tortured, dying ; He deprives Himself of the sympathy of His mother and His friend, He is alone with God ; and now God hides Himself ; and the Son of man endures the blank awful desolation of the soul which is cast off by God.

He, the sinless one, had lived in the light of God's countenance as none other did ; He feels its privation as none other could. It is the last dread penalty of sin to be separated from God, to be abandoned by Grace, to be left in the utter darkness of despair. " God made as though he heard him not " so He " became like them that go down into the pit " (Psalm xxviii. 1).

It would seem to have been at the end of the three hours of darkness, corresponding with the three hours

of this last spiritual agony, that at length, as in amazement and horror and unendurable anguish, He cries out "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

"*My God!*" He no longer says with confidence "Father," but "God." Always He spoke of Him, addressed him, as "Father";¹ even in the agony of Gethsemane He said, "Oh, my Father." Now the sense of filial confidence has fled, and He can only address him as "God." Yet still it is "*my God*"; still, on the verge of despair, he holds fast to God; he calls upon God. In Gethsemane he reached the bounds of obedience; His human will, shrinking with dread, yet adopted the divine will as its own. Here He reaches the bounds of faith. God seems to have forsaken Him, but still He holds fast to God, as Israel held fast the Angel; still he calls upon God, like him who said "though thou slay me yet will I trust thee." "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" "*Why* hast thou forsaken me?" He pleads with God; what have I done that thou shouldst forsake me? He is the only one of all the Sons of men who could thus justly "maintain his own cause." It is only in Him that *we* can say "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect" (Romans viii. 33).

And with the prayer the crisis passes away. Despair, which at length finds utterance in a cry to

¹ John xx. 17 is the only, apparent, exception.

God for help, is no longer despair ; the darkness of the soul is rent asunder by the cry to God, and God dawns upon it.

So, it seems most probable, the symbolical material darkness also at the same time passed away ; and the light of day relieved from their terror the awed spectators of the scene.

Our consideration of the subject is by no means concluded till we have observed that these words are identical with those of the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm, that wonderful Psalm which reads like a narrative, rather than a prophecy, of the Passion :—

“ They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones : they stand staring and looking upon me (v. 17).

“ They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture (v. 18).

“ All they that see me laugh me to scorn : they shoot out the lip and shake their heads, saying,

“ He trusted in God that he would deliver him : let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him (vv. 7, 8).

“ But be not thou far from me, O Lord ; O my strength haste thee to help me ” (v. 19).

The strain of anguish and of prayer ending in the voice of praise and thanksgiving :—

“ Ye that fear the Lord praise him ; all ye, the seed of Jacob, glorify him ; and fear him all ye seed of Israel (v. 23).

“ For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted ; neither hath he hid his face from him ; but when he cried unto him he heard (v. 24).

My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation ” (v. 25).

It is remarkable how often, in reading the biographies of great saints, we find that they were subject to seasons of spiritual darkness and distress. We, too, may have experience of seasons when the heavens seem brass, and the earth iron, and God seems to have forgotten us, and our religion seems a vain imagination. Let us take courage; God has not really forsaken us; He only tries us; He seeks to make us cling closer to Him, by letting us feel something of what it would be to be separated from Him for ever.

The Fifth Word.

St. John says (xix. 28, 29):—

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.”

Again the true humanity of our blessed Lord is brought vividly to our minds. We know,—happily only by hearsay,—the horrible thirst produced by long torture and wounds. We may conjecture that the tension of spirit had hitherto made our Lord insensible to all mere bodily pain. Now, the tension past, He becomes conscious of the physical suffering and exhaustion, and He does not disdain to say, “I thirst,” and to accept the draught which one of the soldiers gives Him.

This is the obvious natural explanation, and the true one, as far as it goes; and it is full of consolation. We see how truly "He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." He truly suffered, and we can feel assured of His true sympathy with those who suffer. How many in pain and sickness, on fever bed and battle-field, amidst the tortures of martyrdom, have been sustained, have realised that their suffering was sanctified, by the recollection of His sufferings on the Cross.

But the Evangelist shows that this does not exhaust the explanation of the words when he says, "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

"All things were now accomplished." He surveyed the work of atonement and saw that it was accomplished; He looked through the series of prophecy "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," and surveyed "the things concerning Himself." When we hear Him in the preceding Word quote the first verse of the twenty-second psalm, and when we read the remainder of the psalm, we feel persuaded that the whole of it was in His mind. And now we find the Scripture which was to be fulfilled by His "I thirst" in the 69th Psalm, v. 21,—

"They gave me gall to eat; and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink."

And in this same Psalm we find other prophecies of the Passion :—

“Take me out of the mire that I sink not. O let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters (v. 14).

“Let not the water-flood drown me ; neither let the deep swallow me up ; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me (v. 15).

“Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble ; hear me speedily (v. 17).

“Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it ; deliver me because of mine enemies (v. 18).

Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour. My adversaries are all before thee (v. 19).

“Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness ; and I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none” (v. 20).

Thus calmly He surveys the prophetic anticipation of His sufferings. It is not in unrestrained yielding to the physical craving that He says “I thirst,” but only after recognising that it is the will of God, does He seek its alleviation. Otherwise, as in His hunger and thirst in the wilderness, so now, in His death thirst on the cross, He was ready to leave Himself without a word in the hands of God.

Some of the great commentators give a further mystical interpretation to the Saviour’s thirst upon the cross, and see in it a symbolical expression of the intense desire for the salvation of mankind which led him to take the form of a servant, and humble Himself to the death of the cross.

At least we may learn one other lesson. Not to be impatient under our sufferings; they, too, have been foreseen, and are according to the will of God. They are to help us to work out our sanctification. Let us not be in haste to escape from them anyhow but only when they have wrought God's will in us; only when we have calmly examined and ascertained that we may seek alleviation without going against the will and counsel of God for us. We may sanctify our sufferings by joining them with those of Christ, and rejoice in them with St. Paul, as "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ in our flesh" (Col. i. 24).

The Sixth Word.

When Jesus had received the vinegar He said, "It is finished" (John xix. 30).

Jesus had considered and recognised that all things were now accomplished; and He pronounces His work finished.

The Passion; the work of Atonement; the wonderful design of the blessed Trinity.

Begun in the humiliation of the Incarnation; carried on in the patient waiting of the thirty years' obscurity; in His manifestation as God by works of power and words of wisdom; the cup of shame and suffering drained to the dregs; the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for all the sins of all mankind made; the Father's will done; the Divine

Justice vindicated; the Divine love illustrated. All was accomplished—fully, perfectly; and He who knows, pronounced, “*It is finished.*”

Oh! the satisfaction, the joy, the triumph of the retrospect of that great work thus gloriously concluded. Think not only of the Divine nature of the Lord, but of His human nature too, not insensible to the peace which should succeed the storm and strain of the Passion; not insensible to the grandeur of the achievement,—the redemption of the world; not insensible to the dominion and the glory which the Divine man had won, and which made Him the Saviour and Benefactor of the myriads of saved mankind for all eternity. Praised and blessed be His holy name!

He had already, by anticipation, sung His hymn of triumph and thanksgiving (John xvii.) :—

“I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (v. 4).

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee (v. 11).

“And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves (v. 13).

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (v. 24).

“And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v. 26).

Our life and our work are also planned out in the counsels of God ; He hath "prepared good works for us to walk in." Let us seek to know His will, and to fulfil His will, so that, when we come to the end of life, and make a calm retrospect, we may be able humbly to submit our work to our Father, praying His merciful consideration for faults and shortcomings, but feeling that we have not altogether failed in the work which He gave us to do.

The Seventh Word.

We have to go back to St. Luke (xxiii. 46) for the last word :—

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*; and having said this he gave up the ghost."

Again we find, in this supreme word, our Lord is using the words in which the Psalmist had prophesied of Him (Ps. xxxi) :—

"In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust . . . make haste to deliver me . . . Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth. . . O love the Lord all ye his saints, for the Lord preserveth them that are faithful. . . Be strong, and he shall establish your heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord."

"*Father.*" His human soul has emerged from the darkness into the clear consciousness of God's approval of His finished work, of His loving favour. We almost expect to hear once more a voice from

Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

"Into Thy hands I commend [yield up] my spirit." The words mark the voluntariness of His death. He had said, "No man taketh my life from me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Death by crucifixion did not usually take place so soon. The two others who were crucified with Him lived on. But Jesus is now going to exercise His power to lay down His life. Not to escape pain. Not till all His work is finished. But now that it is finished, and no more remains to be done or endured for mankind, He exercises His power to surrender His soul into the hands of God.

"He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." He was truly human, with a human spirit as well as body. No mere phantom feigning the actions of human life. He lived as man lives; He dies as man dies, by separation of the soul from the body.

What a death! We hope to die with dying head supported on soft pillows, soothed by affectionate attentions, and words of prayer. His thorn-crowned head fell forward—ah! it fell upon the bosom of the Father; and His spirit, released from suffering, went forth in peace and triumph into the hands of God. "Into thy hands," said Christ:—"The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there

shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction, but they are in peace" (Wisd. iii. 1-3).

Again Nature showed her sympathy with the great event; or, to speak more correctly, God showed signs in heaven and earth symbolical of the event:—"The earth did quake, and the rocks rent."

The three last Words, we suppose, followed rapidly one upon another. The people had hardly breathed from the tension of the supernatural darkness, when they were startled by the earthquake:—Signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath, such as the Jews had asked of Jesus. And their continued impenitence proved how useless such signs would have been, had Jesus vouchsafed them at their asking.

But there were other significant signs: "The veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." St. Paul seems to say (Heb. x. 20) that it was the second veil, which hung before the entrance to the Most Holy Place, symbolising "the great pall of death and the power of death, through sin separating from God, that is, the *flesh* of sin and death which the Saviour received from us, in order that dying He might rend the veil first in His own flesh, and the Spirit and life of God might burst through upon man in a stream never more to be restrained." ¹

¹ Stier, "Words of the Lord Jesus." *Sub. voc.*

Another sign of similar significance: "The graves were opened, and after His resurrection many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves, and went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matt. xxvii. 51-54); signifying that His death had destroyed the power of death, and that through His resurrection all should rise again. "O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!"

We are told the effect of these latter wonders upon the minds of the spectators—the three hours' darkness, and the unusual death, and the earthquake;—"When the centurion, and they that were with him [*i.e.* the soldiers], watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly," and "the centurion glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." "Truly this was the Son of God." "And all the people that had come together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned."

Jesus, the great example, teaches us how to die, humbly commending our souls into the hands of God as to a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour. Our trembling, shrinking souls, when we give up the ghost, do not pass out into the dark, but into the warm, gentle, loving hands of the Father who made us, and who loves us in Christ Jesus.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my

last end be like His!" Yes, but that it may be so, we must live the life of the righteous, the faithful, pure, obedient, loving, self-sacrificing life of Christ.

Let us take up our cross and follow Him. Let us crucify the natural man with the affections and lusts.

"Every man," says an old writer, "has a cross outside his Jerusalem,—the city of his soul,—on which he crucifies either himself or Christ." With us which is it?

CHAPTER XL.

THE CRUCIFIED.

CALVARY, the Cross rising out of it, the dead Christ upon the Cross. It had all come about in the natural course of human motive and action. The unscrupulous policy of the High Priest and Sanhedrim, the contemptuous indifference of Herod, the selfish cowardice of Pilate, wrought whatever they would, but it was what "God's hand and God's counsel had determined before to be done" (Acts iv. 28 ; iii. 18). It is not merely the undeserved sufferings of an innocent man which we have followed with pained interest ; the sight before us is not merely a dead man. We have been witnessing the final and decisive combat of the Divine man against the powers of evil. Those sufferings were the Champion's great blows against sin and Satan, and His death was the final stroke of victory ; for He fought by patient endurance and conquered by dying. And the dead Christ upon the Cross is the trophy of the victory which was the world's redemption.

Christ's death was the great Sacrifice for sin. The rude vulgar cross becomes dignified into an altar ; the

poor, bleeding man upon it is "the Lamb of God," the Divine Victim; the judicial murderers were the assistants who prepared and bound and slew the sacrifice; when He ascended to heaven He, as High Priest, carried His own blood into the Most Holy Place, and made atonement before God for us.

Christ upon the cross is the centre of religion. This is the Seed of the Woman promised after the Fall, whose heel indeed Satan bruised in His passion and death, but who bruised Satan's head with the same passion and death, and "destroyed the works of the Devil." The long line of ancient sacrifices of slain beasts, from the two lambs which God taught Adam and Eve to offer before they were expelled from Paradise,¹ down to the last victim which was offered on the great altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, pointed to this, and were fulfilled in it. On the very eve of its offering the Lord had ordained a new memorial of it, and the long line of eucharists of the church of Christ spring out of it, and commemorate it to the end of time. And when time shall be no more, we read, in the description of the heavenly worship, that there is "a Lamb as it were slain in the midst of the throne" of heaven, and "the four-and-twenty elders fall down before the Lamb, saying, Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." And

¹ See p. 384.

the angels say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." "And every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea," says, "Blessing and honour and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."¹

Christ was the great Sacrifice to which all others point, but what is the meaning of sacrifice? The man who stood before an altar offering a sacrifice admitted—(1) that the wages of sin is death, (2) that he himself was a sinner, (3) that God had consented to accept some other in his place, (4) that his victim represented this other, and (5) that the blood of the victim made satisfaction for his sins. That other was Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Nothing, perhaps, can be more clear and definite than the words which the Spirit put into the mouth of Isaiah long before,—

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed. 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. . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."²

¹ Rev. v. 6-14.

² Isaiah liii. 3-10.

And this inspired explanation shows us that not only the death, but the previous sufferings, of our Blessed Lord, were part of the Sacrifice.

It is conceivable that the Son of God might have become man, in order to enter into intimate relations with our human race; He might have taught His doctrines and wrought His miracles; He might have lived His life as a pattern of the way in which men ought to live, and have manifested His character as an illustration of perfect humanity, and might all the while have lived the life of serene happiness which became—as it seems to us—alike His divine personality and His human sinlessness. Nay, if it was necessary that He should lay down His life as a sublime sacrifice for the sins of the race, it is conceivable that He might have permitted Himself, amidst the mingled tears and praises and thanksgivings of mankind, to be laid upon the great brazen altar of burnt-offering in the midst of the magnificent court of the Temple,—as Isaac His prototype was laid on the altar on the wood,—and so, by a comparatively painless death, or even by a painless euthanasia, have ascended, like Elijah, in a chariot of fire. But we gather that the indignities and tortures of the passion the agony of Gethsemane, the abandonment of the three hours' darkness, the horrible and ignominious death of the cross, were necessary parts of the penalty which He bore for us. All this it cost to redeem us.

The question still remains, and is sure to be asked by a thoughtful mind, how could the death of one innocent person, whoever he might be, be accepted by Eternal Justice, as a substitute for the real guilty one?

It is according to the method of God's Revelation to tell us the facts which it is necessary for our salvation to know, to tell us what we are to do in order to co-operate with what God has done and is doing for our salvation, and not to explain to us why God did this, or why we are bidden to do the other. It is better to admit at once that in this matter God has not seen fit to reveal, and that, therefore, we cannot know, all the meaning of this great mystery of redemption, which the "angels desire to look into."

But something may be said which may perhaps help us in part to realise its meaning. We must clearly understand, to begin with, that the nature of this transaction is not, as some imagine, that the compassionate Saviour threw Himself between a condemned race and the wrath of an angry God, and wrung from Him, by His humiliation and sufferings and death, the pardon which He was unwilling to give. The Father concurred with the Son in this great act of love and self-sacrifice; "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" to die for it.

The ancient series of typical sacrifices reached its highest point of typical significance in the sacrifice

of Isaac, which took place, be it remembered, on this very mountain; and in this transaction it is not only the meek resignation of the son which is brought before us, but also, with a wonderful pathos, the anguish of the father, who devotes "his son, his only son, whom he loves," at the claim of a great religious necessity. Herein God the Father, in His condescension, represents His co-operation in the death and passion of the Son.

The problem to be solved, so to speak, was this. God must, by the necessity of His divine nature, be perfectly, infinitely just. But the just judge can no more let the guilty escape than he can let the innocent suffer. One is as contrary to justice as the other. Considerations of mercy may come in afterwards. But even in our imperfect social condition, if a judge should let a criminal escape, out of mere pity, we should feel that every vice had received encouragement, and every virtue had been discountenanced by the unrighteous decision, and that a blow had been struck at the very basis of society. So if God, the King and Judge of angels and men, could cease to be perfectly, infinitely just, the corner-stone of the universe would be shattered; the bond which holds together all reasonable beings who people all the worlds would be snapped asunder, and men and angels let loose to sin without restraint. For God must be consistent; if He overlook one breach of His

law He must overlook all. If God be inconsistent the moral universe has nothing firm to stand on, and must fall into ruin.

The problem, then, was this, how could God be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner? This was what the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God effected. He became man, yet without inheriting the fall; He rendered a perfect obedience to the law of God; and then He offered Himself a voluntary sacrifice for sin. The infinite dignity of Him who thus obeyed and died made His obedience a full satisfaction to the Eternal Justice for the sins of the whole world.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in his "Great Exemplar," gives an illustration which may help us to understand the nature of this "satisfaction." Zeleucus, king of the Locrians, finding that lust was undermining the virtue of the State, published a law that any one of his subjects found guilty of adultery should be punished by the loss of his eyes. His own son was the first convicted under the law. What was to be done? If the king let his son go free he could not justly punish any other, and the law must be a dead letter, and lust be allowed to run riot. To inflict the penalty would disqualify the prince from reigning, lead to a disputed succession, and bring another set of evils upon the State. The king solved the problem by sharing the penalty with his son. Each was deprived of an eye.

The law was vindicated, and the prince was spared. So God gave His only-begotten Son, and the Son gave Himself an innocent victim, for the race with which He united Himself; and so mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other (Ps. lxxxv. 10). God was able to be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

The cross of Christ is the measure of the sinfulness of sin. Sin is so horrible a thing, so huge a difficulty in the universe, that it needed the Incarnation and death of the Son of God to rescue the race which had become infected with it.

The cross of Christ is the measure of the love of God. From the height of heaven to the depth of earth, from the bliss and glory which the Beloved Son had with the Father before the world was, to the torture and ignominy of the cross, this is the measure of the love of God for sinful man. The cross is St. Paul's measure of "the length and breadth and depth and height" of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 18, 19).

The dead Christ on the cross! What countless representations of it have men made to themselves, from the rude scratches on the wall of the hermit's cell to the ivory and jewelled masterpiece of art on the altar of a cathedral; what countless better representations of it has faith presented before the eyes of the penitent

sinner closed in prayer, and the eyes of the dying saint closing upon this world. It is the symbol which sums up Christianity. God Incarnate dying for men. Sin atoned; death conquered; heaven won!

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BURIAL.

IT seemed, doubtless, to the Jewish authorities that the death of Jesus had put an end to the pretensions of this latest claimant of the Messiahship. Yet we see already indications of His approaching triumph. The penitent thief believed on Him as He hung dying on the cross; the centurion who superintended the execution, as soon as He was dead, said, "Truly, this was the Son of God"; the people, who had at first mocked Him, at last smote their breasts in compunction, as they returned to the city. Joseph of Arimathea, who is described as rich and honourable, a good and just man, a member of the Sanhedrim, who was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews," who had not consented to their "counsel and deed" against Jesus, now threw aside his reserve, went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus, in order to give it burial. Nicodemus, too, another member of the Sanhedrim, who at first came to Jesus by night, and who had once cautiously interposed a word on His behalf in the Council, now

broke through his caution, and joined Joseph in his pious task.

“ Pilate marvelled if He were already dead ” ; but when he had summoned the centurion who superintended the execution and received his report, which left no doubt that the sentence had been fully carried out, he directed the body to be given to Joseph. And he bought a winding-sheet of fine linen and took Him down from the cross, and wrapped Him in the linen. And, since that day was the Preparation (*i.e.* the Friday), and the Sabbath was rapidly approaching, they took the body to an adjoining garden which belonged to Joseph, in which was a tomb hewn out of the rock, in which no one had yet been laid. And they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in the linen with the spices, and laid it in the tomb, and rolled a great stone, probably the unfinished door of the tomb, so as to block temporarily the entrance into the sepulchre, and departed.

“ And the women, also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment.”

“ Now the next day the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again : ” — they had come at last

to understand the meaning of the signs which Jesus had thrice given them,—“Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first.” But Pilate was angry with them and with himself, and not disposed to make any concession to them. He had refused to alter the title on the cross at their request; he had given up the body of Jesus to His friends; and now he repulses them: “Ye have a watch [perhaps a guard of Roman soldiers put at their disposal during the feast]; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch” (Matt. xxvii. 62-66).

After the turbulent and tragical scenes of the Passion, after the intense spiritual interest of the Words on the Cross, after the deposition of the body in the new tomb in the garden, after all is over, a reaction seems to come over our minds, and a calm seems to spread itself over the history. “They rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment”:—the early Church gave it the name of the Great Sabbath.

But the pause in the action of the history is only apparent. While the Sacred Body is being taken

down from the cross, and is resting in the tomb, it is our business to take up the history again at the moment when the Lord cried with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost.

When He "gave up the ghost," what was it which took place? It was the separation of the immaterial part of human nature from the material frame-work; in popular language, the separation of the soul from the body, which takes place at the death of every man.

The body remained upon the cross till the pious care of Joseph and Nicodemus gave it sepulture.

What became of the human soul?

If angels waited about dying Lazarus to bear his soul to Abraham's bosom, may we not be sure that they awaited His death upon whom they were attending throughout His earthly career, and that His soul "was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom,"—went to the place of departed spirits; in the language of the Creed, "descended into hell?"

But the Divine Nature? Is indissolubly united with the human nature, and went forth with it into Hades¹ among the blessed dead, and there the Christ preached to them the glad tidings of the Incarnation

¹ The opinion of the ancient theologians was, that since the body is a part of the human nature, the Divine nature remained also with the Sacred Body.

of the Son of God, and His victory over sin and death, and His accomplishment of the work of Redemption.¹

¹ The third of the Thirty-nine Articles had originally another clause in these words: "For the Body lay in the Sepulchre until the Resurrection, but His Ghost departing from Him was with the ghosts that were in prison, or in hell, and did preach to the same, as the place of St. Peter doth testify."

PART V.—THE RISEN LIFE.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE RESURRECTION.

IN the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week Behold there was a great earthquake: for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Such is St. Matthew's magnificent description of the outward terrors which accompanied our Lord's resurrection. He does not say that the stone was thus rolled away in order to make a way for the Lord to come forth. He who in His risen body could appear in the Upper Room, when "the doors were shut for fear of the Jews," could come forth from the sepulchre still closed and sealed. And it is the opinion of many of the great ancient

writers that our Lord had already risen, and gone forth; and that the appearances of the angels, who had, doubtless, been attendant upon the Resurrection, one opening the tomb and others sitting within it, was for the sake of the women,—as the angel and the attendant choir at the Nativity for the sake of the shepherds, and the two angels at the Ascension for the sake of the apostles, and all these things ultimately for the sake of the whole church.

We have not sufficient data for arranging all the events of this day with any certainty in the order of time in which they occurred, but the following sketch will help the reader to the probable arrangement, which has a large consensus of commentators in its favour.

It will be remembered that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, no doubt with the assistance of their servants, had placed the body of our Lord in the tomb, on Friday evening, “and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed,” just in time to avoid a breach of the Sabbath.

But “when the Sabbath was past” (Mark), “very early in the morning” (Luke), “when it was yet dark” (John), “as it began to dawn” (Matthew), the holy women set out to the sepulchre, bearing the spices which they had prepared, in order to proceed with the intended embalming. It is possible that the women came in two parties, one spoken of by

Matthew and Mark, the other by Luke and John, who visited the sepulchre at different times; and they "came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun" (Mark). And when they had entered into the garden and came within sight of the grotto, they saw that the stone was rolled away, and the entrance to the tomb stood open. And Mary Magdalene, we conjecture, at once ran back to tell Peter and John of this, which, as it had certainly not been done by His disciples, must, she thought, have been done by others, in order to remove the body.

"She runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John xx. 2).

The rest of the women entered into the sepulchre, probably into the outer chamber, and saw an angel in the appearance of "a young man clothed in a long white garment," sitting on the right side, and they were afraid. "And he said, Be not afraid. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid Him," inviting them apparently to enter, or at least to advance and look into, the inner chamber, in the wall of which was the *loculus* in which the sacred body had been laid. Then he resumes, "But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Mark xvi.). "And

they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word" (Matthew xxviii. 8).

But Peter and John had previously received the message of Mary Magdalene, and ran to the sepulchre, and John "did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet," with the retiring modesty characteristic of the youngest of the apostles, "went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him," and, with his characteristic impetuosity, at once "went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed." Believed what? Apparently the news which Mary had brought of the body having been removed, which was what they came to ascertain for themselves. "For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own home."

The First Appearance.

Mary, we suppose, returned to the sepulchre, arriving there after the two apostles had already departed, and she stood without, weeping for what she supposed to be the desecrated tomb and the stolen body. After a while, "as she wept, she stooped down¹ and looked into the sepulchre and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." Stier ("Words of the Lord Jesus") gives us a beautiful thought here:—So we stand without by the graves of our dead weeping: if we would look within, in faith, we should see a vision of angels and hear a message of comfort.

"They say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou"? Her eyes are dimmed with tears, and her heart dulled

¹ Peter also "stooped down" to look into the sepulchre. It is very common in the East to make doorways very low; the doorway into Jerome's monastery at Bethlehem was low; the doorway into Kochane's church is 3 feet high, partly to prevent animals from entering, partly to make them more easily defensible against men. Vineyards outside Tabreez have low doorways closed by massive stone doors, turning on stone pins, worked out of the stone itself. In such cases it would be necessary for a man to stoop in order to look into the chamber to which the door gave access.—"Christians under the Crescent," pp. 214, 302.

with grief, and the sight of the "two men in shining garments" did not make her afraid, as it had the other women. She replied simply out of the fulness of her heart, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." "They have taken away *the* Lord," she had said to Peter and John; there is an exquisite touch of nature and of pathos in her saying to these strangers, "They have taken away *my* Lord."

"And when she had said this she turned herself back,"—perhaps some look or gesture of the angels at the sudden appearance of the Lord made her turn,—“and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” Whether it was that her tear-dimmed eyes and grief-dulled heart prevented her from looking at Him observantly; or whether, as in the subsequent appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, so in this, “her eyes were holden,” or he “appeared in another form.” For when Jesus addressed her, “Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?” still she did not recognise Him; but “supposing him to be the gardener, she saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” The unexpected interposition of Nicodemus and Joseph on Friday evening, the statement that the body was carried to Joseph of Arimathea’s garden and laid in his unfinished tomb, “because the Jews’ prepara-

tion day for the sepulchre was nigh at hand," seem to indicate that the disciples may have regarded Joseph's tomb as only a temporary resting-place; and make Mary's conjecture that the person who had the control of the garden had removed the body, a not improbable one.

"Jesus said unto her, Mary!"

The one word, spoken, doubtless, in the tone in which she had often heard it, full of sympathy, full of searching power, struck, as mere tones often do, full on the chord of memory. Who fails to picture to himself the sudden uplifting of the drooped head, the wide opening of the eyes, the lighting up of the whole face, the impulsive movement with which she starts forward to seize His hand or arm, the joyful exclamation "Rabboni!" my Master!

But Jesus withdraws a step and says, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren and say unto them I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Our Lord's meaning in this reply is obscure, and has afforded subject of various interpretations. Why does He say to the Magdalene "touch me not," since He allowed the other women a little later to "hold him by the feet and worship him" without rebuke, and since the same evening He bade the apostles "handle me and see"? What is the meaning of the

reason He gives "*for* I am not yet ascended to my Father" ?

We give briefly the general interpretation of the best commentators. Mary's attempt to lay her hands upon our Lord was not in the spirit of the other women who "held him by the feet" in adoration, or of the apostles who, at His invitation, touched His body with reverent awe ; but was an impulsive gesture of mere human affection, unbecoming the new relations in which the Risen Lord stood to her, and to all His disciples, and to all human kind. "*For* I am not yet ascended" may mean the old relations of familiar human intercourse are ended, the new relations of spiritual nearness of intercourse not begun till after the ascension. This seems to be what St. Paul means when he says (2 Cor. v. 16) "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Perhaps He had indeed appeared to her first because her grief was greatest, and that because her love was greatest ; but the great object of His appearance to her was not to resume old relations, but to reward her fidelity at the cross and grave by making her the first human witness of His resurrection, and by giving to her, and sending by her, the first announcement of His approaching ascension. "Go to my brethren," the Risen Lord still graciously calls His disciples His brethren, "and tell them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

“I ascend.” He anticipates it in His human mind and thought with exultation, it is the ascension to His Kingdom and glory, the kingdom and power which will enable Him to work out all His great designs for the eternal happiness of mankind, the glory which He values because He will share it with His redeemed.¹

“To my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,” not to our Father and our God, because the Father is His Father in a different sense from that in which He is our Father, and His God in a different sense from that in which He is our God.

We record our Lord's appearance to the other women narrated by St. Matthew, before we make some general remarks on the particular features of the two appearances.

The Second Appearance.

“And as they” (*i.e.*, probably, the other women)² “went to tell his disciples” of the vision and message of the angel,—

“Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto

¹ John xvii. 22, 24.

² Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, all place this appearance of our Lord to the women in this place; though some suppose it to have taken place towards the close of the Forty Days.

them, Be not afraid ; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me " (Matt. xxviii. 9, 10).

Possibly the "brethren" He mentioned means not the apostles only, but the disciples generally.

Possibly here comes the general summary statement of St. Luke (xxiv. 10, 11), "It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

The appearance of the angels at the sepulchre causes us no surprise ; it seems natural. We have gathered from the whole history that they were always about our Lord, as they are about us, and that they ministered to Him, as they minister to us who are heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). But what is remarkable is their variety of appearance ; "the angel of the Lord," whose "countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," who rolled back the stone, and the one "young man clad in a long, white garment," who "sat at the right side," and the "two men in shining garments," and the "two angels in white, sitting one at the head and the other at the feet." And still more remarkable, that the first was seen by the soldiers, and the others by the women, and none of them by the apostles. We gather, throughout the Scriptures, that angels have the power

to make themselves visible, or to remain invisible to men; so at the Nativity, the multitude of the heavenly host were at first unseen, and afterwards seen. And we see, in other instances, that they sometimes appear as mere men,¹ at others, in a glorious or terrible splendour.² We also have indications, that men may see or not see angels, according to their own mental or spiritual state; so Elisha prayed God to open the eyes of his servant that he also might see the horses and chariots of fire which Elisha saw round about him.

The Third Appearance.

An appearance to St. Peter, is mentioned in Luke xxiv. 34. without any note of the circumstances, and without any note of time, except that it was between the appearance to Mary Magdalene, which is specially said to be the first of His appearances, and that to the assembled apostles the same evening, when it is told to the two disciples returned from Emmaus. It is very possible that it occurred in the morning, after the appearance to the women. It seems in keeping with the character of St. Peter, that when the women came relating their wonderful story, that they had seen the Lord, though all the apostles were incredulous, that he, in his impulsiveness, should

¹ Gen. xviii. 2; Mark xvi. 5, &c. ² Judges xiii. 6, 23; Matt. xxviii. 2, &c.

set out again to the sepulchre by himself ;¹ and it may have been then that the Lord appeared to him. Why did He appear to Peter, who had denied Him, and not to him and John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," when the two visited the sepulchre together? Perhaps because Peter needed the speedy assurance of pardon and love to save him from despair, or, at least, to mitigate his bitter regret. As there is, in a sense, "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance," so, in a sense, God gives more sensible comforts and supports to penitent sinners than to saints, having merciful regard to their needs rather than to their deserts.

Why did our Lord appear first to the women before He appeared to any of the apostles? Why do the women so readily believe in His resurrection, while the apostles are so slow of belief? The two facts go together. The one believe with the slowness of calculating judgment, the other with the quickness of loving zeal; men reason, women feel; and this very unreasoning affection made the women more bold in their fidelity, and more constant in their attachment. They stood by the cross when the apostles stood aloof in perplexity; it was not the apostles who begged the body, and laid it in the tomb, but the

¹ St. Luke's notice, "Then arose Peter and ran unto the sepulchre," &c. (xxiv. 12), may relate to this second visit.

women were there to help; they were last at the entombment, and first at the resurrection. The risen Lord appears first to them, to reward them for their love and faithfulness. Not only so, but with the further design, that they should form one of the links in the preparation of the church to receive the truth of the resurrection; so the minds of the women are prepared by the empty tomb and the vision of angels, the minds of the apostles by the report of the women, and the minds of the 500 by the message of appointment, and the mind of Cleopas and his friend by the opening of the Scriptures, and the mind of the church by the combined word of the witnesses and the testimony of prophecy. Jeremy Taylor has a thought here, "Tender dispositions and pliant natures will make up a greater number in heaven than the severe and wary and inquiring people, who sometimes love because they believe, and believe because they can demonstrate, but never believe because they love. When a great understanding and a great affection meet together it makes a saint great like an apostle" ("The Great Exemplar").

The Fourth Appearance.

Two of the disciples, not of the apostles, one named Cleopas, the other unnamed, were going the same day, apparently in the latter half of the day, from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus, at a distance of about "threescore furlongs," *i.e.*, about $7\frac{1}{2}$

miles;¹ and as they went "they talked together of all these things which had happened. And while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them." St. Mark says, He "appeared in another form unto them"; St. Luke says, "their eyes were holden that they should not know him." The two statements are not contradictory, but complementary. "As His manifestation generally, so His manifestation in this or that way, was conditioned by a corresponding influence upon those who beheld, and accompanied by it" (Stier). Whatever the cause, the fact is quite clear, that throughout a long conversation, whose subject-matter was our Lord Himself, whose argument was the Scripture indications that Jesus was to suffer and die and rise again, though their thoughts were turned in this direction, and His words made their hearts burn within them, yet they did not recognise Him, they did not suspect that it was He.

The opening conversation is recorded at length by St. Luke: "He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" He knew, but appearing to them as a stranger, He conceals His knowledge; besides, with true sympathy, He would lead them first to open their hearts and give expression to their

¹ The received reading; but see Conder's "Tentwork in Palestine," i. 14.

trouble and sorrow ; the mere utterance of our anxiety and grief into a friendly ear, instead of shutting it up in the heart and brooding over it, affords some relief ; and, moreover, it opens the heart to consolation. ‘Cleopas answered, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?’ He does not say whether He knows, or does not know, to what they allude ; but in pursuance of His own intention, draws them on to speak at length of that of which their hearts are full, by the further question, “What things?” Whereupon they tell Him, first one speaking and then the other taking up the history, which St. Luke summarises in the words, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,”—*that* they still hold to, however disappointed in Him in other respects ;—“And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.” These were the things which had come to pass in Jerusalem, and which had caused so much excitement that they supposed it impossible for any one, out of the many strangers who filled Jerusalem at the Feast, to be ignorant of the facts. But they go on to speak of their own relation to the history in a way which seems to indicate that this stranger, by that gift of sympathy which some possess, had already won their confidence.

“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. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and they found not his body, but said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us [viz. Peter and John, and perhaps others not mentioned], went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said. But him they saw not” (Luke xxiv. 21-24).

All this gives us a very interesting view of the great transactions we have been studying, as they presented themselves to the eyes of ordinary disciples. We note the lasting impression produced by our Blessed Lord on the minds and hearts of those who had known Him; they still regard Him with respect and affection, though their hopes in Him have been so rudely dispelled. That He was a prophet mighty in word and deed, before God as well as the people, they still maintain, in spite of His apparent failure, utter and ignominious. We note, too, in them, as in the apostles, that failure to realise the meaning of the forewarnings of His fate which He had given them, which seems so strange to us, to whom the warning has always been presented side by side with the fulfilment.

Having thus drawn them on to speak all that was in their hearts, then the Lord took up the discourse: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe, notwithstanding all that the prophets have spoken.” He at once goes

to the heart of the matter, rebukes their faint hopes and ready disappointment, and demands belief in Jesus. Then He puts full before their minds the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" He puts the two ideas before their minds,—Suffering and Glory,—and the one the condition of the other." And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

He does not at once reveal Himself to them in His Person, but through His Word.

The Evangelist does not give us even the briefest summary of this great exposition of "Christ in the Scriptures." He expounded unto them in *all* the Scriptures the *things*,—not merely the direct verbal prophecies,—concerning Himself. Not only the Seed of the woman, and the Promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Moses, David. The "things" concerning Himself in the Scriptures would include the Exposition of the Law, which condemns sin; and the Sacrifice, which figuratively predicts the atonement; the typical nature of the whole history of God's people from the Creation to the Resurrection; the way in which the whole history of mankind had pointed and pressed forward to a Deliverer, not of Israel only, but of mankind. The "things" in Isaiah,—a Deliverer, not without conflict, glorified through

suffering, glorified above all the glory of the universe at the right hand of God, through humiliation and anguish, in which were gathered together shame and suffering and agony inexpressible.

The Evangelist does not attempt to give even the briefest summary, but that divine exposition, developed by the Holy Spirit, is the basis of the teaching of the Church of Christ. We have the substance of this great discourse, not only when Matthew says, "This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," or when Paul interprets what "the Holy Ghost signified" by the ordinances of the old law, or when John reveals how the Paradise was a type of the New Jerusalem; but what lay hidden in all the Old Testament Scriptures of the suffering and the glory of the Christ is expounded in all the Scriptures of the New Testament; and what they both tell us of Christ's suffering and glory will, perhaps, be more fully revealed to us hereafter.

"And as they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further." Thus Christ makes as though He would withdraw Himself in order to incite us to more earnest desire for His presence. "But they constrained him, and said, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He responded to their wishes, and "went in to tarry with them." And their evening meal was prepared and set before them. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took

bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." In relating what took place to the apostles, the same evening, they said, "He was known of them in breaking of bread." It is abundantly clear that their recognition of Him is in some way connected with this significant breaking of the bread, and that there is a Eucharistic allusion of some sort. It was not a reminiscence of the institution of the Last Supper which caused them to recognise the Lord, for these two disciples had not been present on that occasion, and it is very improbable that amidst all that hurry of great events which had filled up the time from Maundy-Thursday to Easter-Day, the apostles had described to the disciples the circumstances of the institution, whose significance they themselves probably did not yet realise. There is nothing to justify the assumption that it was an actual celebration of the Eucharist on the part of our Lord. And yet the pointed statement that it was when "he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them" that "their eyes were opened, and they knew him," has a Eucharistic allusion too plain to be overlooked. We accept Stier's explanation, that the transaction has a typical significance, and means, "In this breaking of the bread the risen Lord will ever reveal Himself to those who believe in Him."

"He vanished out of their sight." His first

approach to them as they walked along the road seems to have been in such a way as seemed natural in a man travelling the same way, nothing in it excited special attention. But it is clearly stated that in His disappearance there was something preternatural, at least to the nature of a mortal body, though natural, it may be, to a risen, "spiritual body"; "he vanished out of their sight,"—became suddenly invisible to them. We call attention to the fact here, we shall have occasion to dwell on its significance hereafter.

The Fifth Appearance.

The narrative of the appearance to the two disciples continues, and leads up to the account of the next appearance. When Jesus had vanished from their sight the two disciples naturally converse upon what had happened; it is the first opportunity they have had of comparing their impressions; and we note that what they specially dwell upon is not the fact of the resurrection, not His appearance or disappearance, but the effect produced upon their minds by His discourse to them: "they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" His words, His tones, His looks, kindled a glow of conviction, a glow of emotion at the grand and glorious truths thus set before them. The chief,

total, and lasting effect of His appearance, was the moral effect of His words, not the mere wonder of the incident.

Then, late as it was, they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and went to the house where they knew they were likely to find some of the apostles, probably the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. The doors were shut and secured for fear of the Jews, but were opened to the two disciples, and there they found ten of the apostles (Thomas was absent), "and them that were with them," viz., the women or some of them, and perhaps other disciples. They found the Christian company at their evening meal, but in a state of excitement; and were at once met with the news which agitated them:—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." They seem to have passed over the appearances to Mary Magdalene and the other women as less conclusive. They had thought their first account of the visions of angels were "idle tales"; they would therefore be disposed to hesitate to accept their further stories of the appearances of Christ as other than similar illusions of a highly-wrought imagination; but when Peter also affirmed that the Lord had appeared to him, his character guaranteed his testimony, and they believed.

Then Cleopas and his companion related what had happened to them on their way to Emmaus,

and how Jesus "was known of them in breaking of bread."

And while they were thus speaking, and while the disciples were hesitating¹ to receive their intelligence, lo, "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them"! In the same mysterious way in which He had disappeared from the sight of the two as they sat at table at Emmaus, in the same mysterious way He suddenly appeared in the sight of the disciples now, standing in the midst of them; and saluted them, "Peace be unto you!"

Notwithstanding the previous assurances of His resurrection, and several appearances, yet the sudden apparition had the natural effect of exciting the superstitious fear which seizes most men's nerves when brought into contact with the supernatural; "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." The mysterious nature of His appearance, notwithstanding the closed doors, proved that it was not a mere natural body, under the ordinary conditions of humanity, which they saw. Jesus took means to reassure them. "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet," bearing the scars of the sacred wounds, "that it is I myself." I am not merely an unreal appearance, a spirit; "handle me," and convince yourselves, "for a spirit hath not flesh

¹ "Neither believed they them" (Mark xvi. 13).

and bones as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken he showed them his hands and his feet" (Luke), "and side" (John). While they yet could not believe for the very joy and wonder of it, and stood in amazement, He gave them another proof of His true corporeity, "Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them."

By this time their minds had had leisure to grasp the wonderful fact; passing through the stages of affright, and incredulous amazement, and joyful conviction,—“then were the disciples glad” (John),—at length they were sufficiently composed for conversation. “Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you,” and then spoke the words which show us the great purpose (beyond the evidence of His resurrection) of this appearance: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Looking forward to His own ascension, He began already to unfold His designs for the future conduct of the work of the redemption of mankind. He commits to the Church the grand mission which the Father had given to Him, and gives to it the authority and the power necessary to the fulfilment of the mission. For “when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain

they are retained." The power of the Spirit was the indispensable qualification for fulfilling the mission which Christ gave to His Church, and the object of the mission was to give remission of sins to those who would repent and believe. A very striking and important act. This breathing was certainly an outward sign of the conferring of the Holy Ghost immediately spoken of, it was the means by which Christ conveyed that which He bade the apostles receive. God at the creation of man breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The common belief of the Church is that at the creation of man a gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost accompanied this gift of a reasonable and immortal soul. Now the risen Christ again breathes on His Church in token of the giving of the same gifts. As the Father hath life in Himself, so "hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself," "The second Adam was made a quickening spirit."

The relation of this "breathing" and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," to the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, is a question of considerable difficulty. To say that the words and act were only a promise and pledge of the Pentecostal gift, seems an inadequate explanation of the imperative "Receive ye," and to reduce the divine "breathing" to an empty symbol, and to miss the importance of the occasion of the first appearance

of the Risen Lord to the assembled disciples. Yet to say that they now received the gift of the Personal Presence of the Holy Ghost, seems to be in contradiction to the whole tenor and spirit of the history of the Pentecost. Perhaps a comparison with the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, and the gift, with its miraculous manifestation, in the subsequent and connected laying-on of hands, may point to a solution of the difficulty. In that case this breathing and "Receive ye" would really confer the Holy Spirit, which was given in fuller measure, and with special gifts, on Pentecost. This gradual growth, with marked stages of development, is observable throughout the history: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

There were others besides the apostles present on this occasion, as at Pentecost, and as on the occasion of the giving of the great commission (Matt. xxviii. 16-end; Mark xvi. 15-19), and the narrative does not say that the "Peace," and the commission, and the breathing, and the power of the keys, were limited to the apostles. The apostles and others, men and women, assembled here, probably represent the whole Church of Christ, and the words were spoken, and the spiritual gifts given to the Church as a whole, and to the apostles in especial. The whole Church is the Body of Christ, the Spirit personally dwells in the whole Church. But these powers,

inherent in the Church, are to be exercised by the several organs to which they are specially committed :

“He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. iv. 11, 12).

“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, &c. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?” &c. (1 Cor. xii. 28, 29).

There is no note of the termination of this appearance, and we conclude that the Lord vanished out of their sight, in harmony with the suddenness of His apparition in the midst of them, and in the same way as He disappeared from the two disciples at Emmaus.

The Sixth Appearance.

Again, a few words of history connect the last appearance with the next. Thomas was absent when our Lord appeared to the disciples. The other disciples said unto him “we have seen the Lord.” But as they had refused to believe the testimony of the women, and had not given ready credence to the story of Cleopas and his companion, so Thomas refused to believe even now, when the earlier testimonies were thus greatly strengthened by the disciples, fifteen or twenty in number, who had conversed with Him, and seen the sacred wounds, and touched His sacred person. When they told him of this sensible proof of the reality of the Lord’s appearance, he

replied that he would not believe on anything short of similar testimony of his own senses, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." And eight days after, according to Jewish reckoning, *i.e.*, on that day week, which was therefore again Sunday, the disciples were gathered together, apparently in the same accustomed place of meeting, and Thomas was with them. "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst," probably appearing suddenly as before, and addressed them all with His usual gracious salutation, "Peace be unto you." Then He turned to Thomas, and showed that He knew what he had said, and condescended to give him the proof he had desired; for his incredulity had not been the result of an unwilling heart, but of a slow and cautious mind:—"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." It would seem that Thomas did not avail himself of the offered test. The sight of his Lord, after all that he had heard from the others had prepared him for it, was enough to dispel his incredulity on the instant; our Lord's preternatural knowledge of his incredulous words had the same effect as at the beginning of the ministry on Nathanael; His gracious condescension touched his rugged fidelity to the core. All this at once broke down

the crust of incredulity, and led to the instant acknowledgment of the risen Lord:—"He said unto him my Lord and my God!"

But Thomas's exclamation goes much further than a mere acknowledgment that Christ had really risen again from the dead and stood before him. "All those earlier sayings and testimonies of Jesus which pointed to the unity of the Son with the Father, which such a deep-thinking spirit as his had apprehended and pondered from the first, now all seem to combine into clearness, and he beholds at once externally and internally their perfect truth. The doubter overcome, now believes, as is often the case, all the more swiftly, readily, deeply, because of his having long doubted. What no apostle had hitherto said, what the Lord Himself had never said directly, he utters, as the first witness of the last truth." (Stier: "The Words of the Lord Jesus.") At first they had said "what manner of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him." Peter had said "thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," recognising in Him something divine, but with so partial a recognition that directly after "he took him and began to rebuke him, saying this shall not be unto thee;" Thomas is the first who plainly and unambiguously calls Him "Lord and God." And the turn of the phrase gives evidence not only of a fully convinced will but of a full and overflowing heart. Thomas the unbelieving,

is the same Thomas who had said "Let us go also that we may die with him." Such a man would be ordinarily undemonstrative, but when emotion did break through natural reserve, then it would burst out in some strong manifestation; as in the present instance, where he pours out the expression not only of a full apprehension of faith in the risen Jesus as God, but a deep adoring love for the Divine Master: "*My Lord and my God.*"

The Lord replied, with that searching encouraging graciousness which was characteristic of His dealing with His disciples, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thus, having at length given to His chosen witnesses the evidence which has satisfied them all, and after which we hear no more of any doubt on their part, He looks forward to "all them which shall believe on me through their word," by faith not by sight, and pronounces them blessed; it is another and final benediction—blessed are the believing.

All these appearances took place at Jerusalem during the Passover festival.

The Seventh Appearance.

The eight days of the feast being concluded, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee" (Matt. xxviii. 16), for our Lord had bidden the disciples

to go into Galilee, and had promised to meet them there, indicating the very place "on a mountain," and probably also the time. In the meanwhile He vouchsafed another separate appearance to certain of the apostles; "and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus¹ and Nathanael,² of Cana, in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples." "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore," in the dim morning twilight, "but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus," whether because of their distance from the shore, and the partial obscurity, or because He appeared "in another form." "Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have ye any meat. They answered him No." It was the question an early traveller along the shore might ask of a fishing-boat nearing the shore, with the intention to purchase of them for his morning meal. "And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Then that disciple whom Jesus loved said, It is the

¹ The Twin.

² Otherwise called Bartholomew.

Lord." Doubt as to His appearances has altogether ceased ; they are not even unprepared for further appearances, and they recognise His presence not hesitatingly after careful examination of His person, but as we recognise a friend at whose appearance we are not surprised, by some characteristic trait. In the miraculous draught and in the whole tone of the incident, the apostle recognised the Master's manner. Lastly it was the instinct of love which was first to recognise Him, though it was zeal which was most prompt to act, and leaped into the sea to reach Him the sooner. " Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord " he laid hold of his fisher's coat and cast it on, for it is characteristic that he alone apparently of all the party had flung off his garment that he might put his whole strength into his labour ; and now again it is characteristic that he leaves fish and net to their fate, and pausing an instant out of reverence to clothe himself, the next instant he " cast himself into the sea " " for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits [about eighty yards] that he might at once come to Jesus." The other disciples came in a little ship " dragging the net with fishes."

" As soon, then, as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net

to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three, and for all there were so many yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish likewise."

The incidents of the narrative class this appearance with that to Mary Magdalene, or that to the two disciples at Emmaus, rather than with the two other appearances to the apostles. Here is no opening salutation, "Peace be unto you," no encouragement of their recognition. The Lord seems to hold Himself apart. Though Peter cast himself into the sea to go to Him, it does not appear that He did go and address Him, but rather, finding no encouragement to do so, kept at a distance, till at the command, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught," Peter went and drew the net to land. And when all was ready, "Jesus then cometh and taketh the bread and giveth them." It would seem not improbable that He "Showed himself to the disciples" on this occasion in another form, which did not however prevent them, with the experience of former manifestations, from recognising Him in His words and ways. They did not venture to ask Him, but they knew it was the Lord. He seems to have acted with reserve, holding Himself aloof, and they seem to have been hushed into

reverence and awe, and to have silently done what He directed, and waited quietly till He should explain Himself.

We cannot fail to see that the whole transaction is symbolical ; and in attempting to learn what our Lord designed to teach in it, we cannot fail to connect it with the miracle, similar in its general character, different in some of its incidents, which took place at the beginning of the ministry. Then

“ Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets ; and he called them ; and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him ” (Matt iv. 18-22).

They were already His disciples, ever since His baptism ; this was their designation¹ to be apostles ; and this designation was accompanied by the first miracle of the miraculous draught :—When He had spoken to the people out of their boat,

“ He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing : nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

¹ Their actual ordination as apostles took place afterwards (Matt. x. 2-4. Mark iii. 13-19. Luke vi. 12-19).

And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes : and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken : And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

This first miracle clearly was connected with the first designation of the apostles. It was the symbolical assurance that the gospel net, which, as fishers of men, they should let down into the sea of the world, should enclose a great multitude of disciples. That in a whole night's labour they had taken nothing, but when Christ gave the word, they over filled their nets and boats, has an obvious significance. The breaking of the net and escape of part of their take doubtless has also its prophetic meaning in the breaking of the unity of Christ's Church, and consequent loss of souls.

We conclude that the second miracle has a similar general intention and meaning. At the appearance to the apostles on the evening of Easter-Day, our Lord had given them their mission. He was about, on the occasion of the appearance to the general body

of disciples on the mountain, to complete their commission. This miracle has reference to that apostolic work, and is an assurance of success. Again all night they had caught nothing; again, at the Lord's command, they let down the net; again they take such a multitude of fishes that they were not able to draw the net. But on this occasion the net does not break; all the fish are landed. They are all great fishes; not some good and some worthless, as in the Parable of the Net. The net of the first miracle is the net of the parable, which encloses a multitude of good and bad, and breaks and lets some escape, and the remainder are taken into the ship, viz. the ark of Christ's visible Church, which is in danger of sinking. Here the net contains only good fish, and they are all safely landed on the shore, where the Risen Lord stands awaiting them. The numbering of the fish, and the careful record of the number, we feel must shadow out some mystery, which, however, the meditations of nineteen centuries have left unsolved, and which, perhaps, was not intended to be known until the fulfilment shall reveal it. The symbolical feast of bread and fish miraculously prepared, and the command to add to it of the fish now caught, and to which at length, when all is ready, the Lord invites them, seems to have some points of connexion with the two miraculous feedings of the people in the desert, and others with the two

parables of the Marriage Supper; and we may, perhaps, safely conclude that the general meaning of the symbol is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which shall follow upon the final ingathering of the draught of redeemed ones; and in its minor details, perhaps, to the communion of saints ("those now caught") with angels (those already in heaven), and of both with Christ. The whole transaction, then, is a symbol intended for the apostles, and sets forth how by their labours, and the labours of their successors, as fishers of men, the net of the Church, slowly dragged through the ages of the world, should at length be landed safely on the shore of eternity, with its precious burden of souls, every one known and numbered, by the painful ministry and by Christ; and then should ensue the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when the final result of His work and of their work will be united and apparent, and the Master will felicitate His faithful ministers on the results of their joint labours.

"So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He does not now boast his love as above others'; he humbly, but confidently, appeals to our Lord's knowledge of the truth of his love. "He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of

Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee? He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved that he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep."

The threefold repetition of the question would greatly intensify its effect. If we desiderate something more in our Lord's words than a mere threefold repetition of the same idea, we may understand that, with our Lord's special love for the little ones, He first bids him have a special fatherly care for them, "Feed my lambs." Then, distinguishing the adults from the children, "Tend my sheep," Then, having obtained Peter's third heartfelt declaration, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee;"¹ He repeats, emphatically, "Feed my sheep," with reference to the whole flock. If thou

¹ The first and second "lovest thou" is ἀγαπᾷς, and implies the esteem founded on the excellent qualities of the loved one. In Peter's reply he uses the word φιλά, which implies rather unreasoning natural affection. Our Lord, in the third question, adopts Peter's word, thus accepting his assurance of strong personal affection. So in the three "feeds," the first and last is βόσκει, find food for; the second is ποιμανε, which includes all a shepherd's work of tending, leading, guarding, as well as feeding.

lovest Me, show it in thy care for mine. The Lord calls them *My* sheep, *My* lambs, when committing them to the care of His ministry. We may gather that love for Him, which will lead to love for them, is the great qualification for the ministry. "Have always printed in your remembrance how great a treasure is committed to your charge; for they are the sheep of Christ, which He bought with His death, and for whom He shed His blood."¹ We have the whole gospel implied; love was the motive of God's redeeming work; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;" "Christ also hath loved us, and," therefore, "hath given himself for us" (Eph. v. 2). "As my Father hath sent me, even so [in the same spirit of love] send I you" (John xx. 21).

Note that our Lord had already conferred apostolic authority in terms as full as these on all the apostles. The power of the keys conferred on Peter (Matt. xvi. 19) is afterwards conferred in the same terms on all (Matt. xviii. 18). The administration of the Pastorate of Christ, conferred on all in John xx. 21-24, is here confirmed separately to Peter.

The Lord continued: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt

¹ "Exhortation on Ordination of Priests."

be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." This spake He, signifying what death—viz., the death of martyrdom—He should die. "And when he had spoken this, he said unto him Follow thou me." "Then Peter, turning about, seeth John following, and saith, Lord, and what shall this man do"—what will be his fate? "Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

All ancient commentators are agreed that in this special address to St. Peter the Lord is referring to his threefold denial of Him in the Passion. We often look on the whole body as having been unfaithful, and say in a breath that Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, all forsook Him and fled. But we must notice that the degrees of guilt here spoken of are very different. Judas's deliberate betrayal of Him into the hands of those who sought His life is incomparably worse than Peter's cowardly shrinking from the danger of being known as His follower, and Peter's apostacy far worse than the silent shrinking from His side of the rest when they saw that their Master was overpowered and taken. Make what allowances we will for Peter—the sudden surprise, his fidelity in heart even while unfaithful in his lips, his speedy and deep repentance—still Peter's sin was one of open and formal apostacy. This will

help us to understand our Lord's purpose in this address to Peter. The Lord had already forgiven him, He sent a message to him by St. Mary Magdalene, He appeared to him in person; but now, when illustrating the work and success of the apostolate and its succession, He takes steps to reinstate Peter in the apostolic office in the presence of his brethren. It was to give him who had thrice denied Him the opportunity of thrice protesting his love and fidelity. It was done before the other apostles, because Peter had boasted his fidelity as above theirs: "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." A gentle rebuke lay in our Lord's words, yet the rebuke was arranged in love, so that Peter might set himself right with his Lord, with his fellow-disciples, and with his own grieving, loving heart. The command with which the Lord thrice replies to his profession of love, is the formal reinstatement of Peter into his apostolic office, forfeited by his apostacy. And to a man like Peter, of burning zeal, and with a tender heart, overflowing with loving compunction for his fault, and thirsting to prove, if it might be, how truly he yet felt, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee again," it was with exultation he received the Lord's prophecy, that he should again be put to the test of confession or denial, and then should seal his fidelity with his blood.

The expression, "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall bind thee," may seem obscure to us, but the Evangelist expressly tells us that in these words our Lord "signified by what death he should [not die, but, mark the expression] glorify God." To "bind to the cross" seems to have been a common phrase for crucifixion. It intensifies the whole tone and meaning of the passage. The Lord tells Peter not only that he shall show his fidelity in the supreme trial, and die a martyr's death; but that his death shall be the same as his Master's, on the cross he shall glorify God. The legend tells us that when the time came, Peter requested to be crucified head downwards, as unworthy to meet death altogether in the same attitude as his Lord.

When he asks about John's future, our Lord rebukes the spirit of curiosity with the practical "What is that to thee," all thy concern is to faithfully follow Me; at the same time that He did obscurely indicate that John should still survive in that great next coming of Christ, when the state of transition, in which Jew and Gentile stood side by side, but separate in the Christian Church, should pass away with the destruction of the Jewish polity, and the Christian Church in its purity and completeness should be fully and finally established.

The Eighth Appearance.

The appearance to a large body of disciples, "about 500 brethren at once," on a mountain in Galilee is in some sense the great appearance of the Risen Christ. Our Lord Himself, on the eve of His Passion, had expressly spoken of it as the sequel of His Resurrection: "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matthew xxvi. 32). The angel who appeared to the group of women at the sepulchre said, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Mark xvi. 7).

After He had risen He again spoke of it, bidding the women "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

St. Matthew mentions only the first appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the subsequent and connected appearance to the other women, concluding with the Lord's message, "Go tell my brethren," &c.; and then He proceeds at once to mention this appearance in Galilee. St. Luke and St. John pass by this appearance altogether. St. Mark records the great commission which our Lord gave at this time to the Church, but does not define where and when it was given. St. Paul gives us a sense of the greatness of the occasion when, enumerating the chief appearances, he says:—

“He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Cor. xv. 5-9).

The other appearances then which we have considered, and have yet to consider, were special appearances vouchsafed to special persons for special reasons; this was the great appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples generally. It would seem from St. Matthew's narrative of it—“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them”—that some more definite direction had been given by our Lord as to the place of this appearance; and, unless we are to suppose that the 500 disciples had assembled accidentally, or for some other purpose which is not intimated, and which we cannot conjecture, our Lord must have appointed the time as well as the place where He would shew Himself to the disciples. The message given by the Lord must have been conveyed from one to another of the known disciples. These repeated notices of it, before the passion and after the resurrection, the appointment of time and place, the assembly of a great number, and St. Paul's mention of it, with his appeal to the greater number of them then still alive, force upon us a sense of the solemnity and importance of this one appearance,

notwithstanding that only St. Matthew's gospel relates it, and that with exceeding brevity. This is all he narrates of the incidents of this great event :—
“And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them.” We see the large assembly of disciples gathered in groups on the mountain, far from the towns and villages, at the appointed time, in anxious expectation of the promised manifestation. At length Jesus appears,—at first, it would seem, at some little distance ; because it says afterwards, “He *came* and spake unto them.” “And they worshipped him,” they did not run to greet Him, as the Rabbi whom they had loved, or as the Messiah in whom they had hoped, now wonderfully restored to them from the dead ; but when He appeared, they, still remaining at a little distance, “worshipped him.”

“But some doubted.” The statement is one of those admissions which shew the careful veracity of the sacred history. Just as the women readily believed and the apostles doubted, so now with the larger body of disciples, some readily believe at first sight, while some are unconvinced. It is not clear whether they only doubted at first while Jesus was in the distance, and that their doubts were gradually satisfied when He came near, and as He spake ; or whether some continued doubtful—it may very well be—to the end. There is reason again here to con-

jecture that our Lord's risen appearance, though it had sufficient marks of identity to satisfy the minds of most, had yet enough of difference to account for His not being recognised at once and beyond doubt by some.

Then "He came near and spake unto them"—His words acquire a special meaning when we call to mind that this was the one utterance of the risen Christ to the disciples at large—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." It is as the risen Christ addressing His Church that He speaks. As God He possessed all power in heaven and earth from all eternity, and if we accept the profound conclusions of the ancient fathers, the power of the Godhead was always manifested towards the creatures through the second person of the Trinity. It is to the Christ, now that the will of the Father has been accomplished, the work which He undertook finished, that all power in heaven and earth has been given, as the reward of His humiliation and obedience, of His holy life and passion and death.

It is in this plenitude of power that He goes on to give His commission to His Church. The scene reminds us of that earlier day when He first chose the twelve and ordained and sent them. Then the Lord stood in the midst, surrounded by the apostles, who formed an inner circle round Him, and the group of faithful women who ministered to Him stood beside them,

while the general body of the disciples formed an outer circle round about. The words which He speaks on this occasion are addressed to His Church as a whole, represented by the 500, and to the ministry of the Church, represented by the eleven in particular.

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen.”—St. Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—St. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

Putting the two accounts together we get the fuller view of this great utterance of the risen Lord to His Church:—Go ye into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature, and make disciples of all who will accept it, admitting them into the unity of the body of Christ, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by baptising; and then continue teaching them all which I have taught you; he that believeth the gospel and accepts discipleship shall be saved; he that refuseth shall be condemned. And lo I am with my Church always, even to the end of the world. Amen.¹

¹ This word so frequently used by our Lord is a solemn and emphatic asseveration of the truth uttered.

We have here :—

1. The declaration of His own Messianic authority as the basis of His following commission.

2. The command to proclaim the gospel that God has taken our nature and come among us, and has made atonement for our sins, and reconciled us to Himself in Christ. To proclaim it “in all the world,” “to all nations” “to every creature,” to Jew and Gentile, to civilised nations, and to barbarous nations also.

3. The brief, comprehensive direction how to proceed with those who shall accept the proclamation. Make disciples of them, avowed followers of Christ, sworn subjects of His kingdom, receiving them into the kingdom by the initiatory rite of baptism, and then going on to teach them all things which Christ Himself had taught, and by His Holy Spirit should teach them.

4. The great promise that though Christ would no more be visibly among them, yet invisibly He would be with them always, even to the end of the world.

St. Mark adds the promise of the renewal of the miraculous powers which He had given to the apostles when He had first sent them forth to preach, with the addition of others, “And these signs shall follow them that believe : in my Name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink

any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These should be signs to the disciples that though gone away from them, He was still among them, according to His promise; and they should be signs to the world which should certify that the gospel they proclaimed was indeed a gospel from God.

The effect of this appearance of the risen Christ to His disciples must have been great. When the 500 returned to their villages and towns they would tell what they had seen, and thus prepare the hearts of men for the preaching of the gospel. The twelve were His chosen and official witnesses, but all these 500 were His witnesses also;¹ and St. Paul's reference already mentioned is an instance of the way in which their testimony would be continually appealed to for a whole generation of the church's history:—"He appeared to more than 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part are still alive, but some are fallen asleep;" and as, one after another, they fell asleep, the testimony of the survivors would be heard with the deeper interest, till at length surely Christian people would go from far and wide to see and speak with the last old man living who had seen the risen Christ,—and he was possibly the Apostle John

¹ So not only Moses, but above threescore persons with him were admitted to contemplate the divine vision on Sinai.—Exodus xxiv. 9-11.

The Ninth Appearance.

St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7) mentions an appearance to James, and seems to place it here in the order of time: "After that," viz., the appearance to the above 500 brethren at once, "he was seen of James, then of all the apostles," which last appearance seems to have been that of the Ascension. As of the appearance to Peter, so of this to James, we have no particulars whatever.¹

The Tenth Appearance.

The tenth and last of this series of appearances of our Lord is that which ended in His Ascension. We shall consider it first here as one of the appearances of the forty days, the Ascension will need a separate consideration.

It is St. Luke alone who tells us the details of this appearance. But in reading his narrative (xxiv. 44-53), we soon perceive that in the earlier part of it he is giving a summary of all our Lord's sayings during the various appearances already considered. And we may

¹ J. Taylor says that in the [Apocryphal] Gospel of St. Matthew, which the Nazarenes of Berea used, are these words: "When the Lord had given the linen in which He was wrapped to the servant of the High Priest, He went and appeared unto James. For James had vowed, after he received the Lord's Supper, that he would eat no bread till he saw the Lord risen from the grave. Then the Lord called for bread, He blessed it and brake it, and gave it to James the Just, and said, My brother, eat bread, for the Son of Man is risen from the sleep of death."

very profitably study this inspired summary "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake¹ 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,² concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

The words which probably belong to this last appearance begin at the 49th verse : "And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." For the same evangelist in the beginning of his book of the Acts of the Apostles (i. 3) gives us another summary of these great events : "He was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen ; to whom also he showed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible proofs [viz., the repeated appearances under different circumstances, the touch, the eating, &c.], being seen

¹ Comp. Matt. xxviii. 6. Mark xvi. 7. Luke xxiv. 8.

² Luke xxiv. 27.

of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven"; *i.e.*, the principal object of His appearances and discourses in the forty days was first to establish the truth of the Resurrection, and secondly to instruct the apostles concerning His Church.

Then at verse 4 he appears to take up the narrative of the last appearance just as at chapter xxviii. 49 in the Gospel. And, "being assembled with them, 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 baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together"—would seem as if it related to some different gathering from the assembly just mentioned, but that the command not to depart from Jerusalem establishes the fact that this assembly was after all the appearances in Galilee, and when they were gathered together at Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The right conclusion, perhaps, is that the former part of the discourse was spoken by our Lord when He appeared to the apostles assembled again according to their wont in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, and the latter part after they had had opportunities of consulting with one another on the way from the city to the neighbourhood of Bethany, and while they were gathered in a group about Him

immediately previous to His ascension. "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons [the periods and epochs], which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 6, 7, 8). The great subject of this last discourse, then, was the imminent advent of the Holy Ghost.

Let it be recalled to mind here that, whatever indications of the personal existence of the Holy Spirit may be contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, it is in the Incarnation that both the second and third persons of the Holy Trinity are clearly revealed as distinct personal subsistences. When Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin "the *Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son* of God," it was the first time in all the scriptures that the Holy Ghost had been thus spoken of, and the first time He had been revealed to man as a distinct, self-acting, divine person, and it is from this time that the distinct personality of the Son, and of the Spirit, stand out clearly as essential parts of the Divine Being.

John the Baptist had first spoken of the mission of the Spirit: "I indeed baptise with water, but one mightier than I cometh . . . He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke iii. 16).

Our Lord had spoken to His Apostles at considerable length and with great clearness on the subject in the great discourse before His Passion.

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv. 25, 26).

And again,

"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John xv. 26).

And yet again,

"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away I will send him unto you," &c. (John xvi. 7, &c., to the end of the 15th verse).

No doubt the Holy Spirit had been in the world, striving with sinners, helping saints, inspiring prophets, from the beginning, even as the Son had been appearing to men in Theophanies, and ruling them in providence; but as now the Son had come among men in a different way, taking their nature upon Him, and entering into their race, so the Holy Ghost was about to come among men not only by fuller outpouring of grace, but in a different way, entering

personally into redeemed humanity, and vouchsafing a personal and abiding presence in Christ's Church and in each of Christ's people. How great and important this coming of the Holy Ghost we gather from our Lord's words, that it was for the advantage of His disciples that He Himself should leave the world in order that the Spirit might thus come.

The special object of this last appearance, apart from its being the prelude of the visible ascension, is the announcement that now that Christ was about to depart, the Holy Spirit would speedily come, "not many days hence;" and that the apostles were not to depart from Jerusalem, but remain together until the fulfilment of the promise.

Thus we have seen all the great events of redemption were announced beforehand, the Incarnation and Nativity by Gabriel, the whole Ministry by John Baptist, the Betrayal, Passion, Death, and Resurrection by our Lord Himself, the Ascension by our Lord to Mary Magdalene, the coming of the Holy Ghost by John the Baptist, and by our Lord before His Passion and after His Resurrection.

The Forty Days.

We have thus arranged in order and narrated the history of our Lord's appearances during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension.

There are some general considerations which can more conveniently be made here.

St. Luke, looking back over these forty days, and summing up, in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, the characteristic features of their transactions, says, "He showed himself alive to the apostles whom he had chosen by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). Two objects of our Lord are specially mentioned: first to show Himself alive to the apostles whom He had chosen, by many infallible proofs; and second, to speak to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. A brief catalogue of the several appearances will bring them usefully together in one view, and will help us in our reference to them.

1. To Mary Magdalene, very early in the morning of Easter-Day. She is bidden to tell His brethren, first, of course, of His resurrection, and then of His approaching ascension (John xx. 11-19; Mark xvi. 9).

2. To the women, also early in the morning, as they returned from the sepulchre. They are bidden to tell His brethren, first, of course, of His resurrection, and then to remind them of the appointed appearance in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 9). The apostles do not believe the testimony of the women.

3. To Peter, probably in the morning (1 Cor. xv. 5; Luke xxiv. 34).

4. To the two disciples at Emmaus, in the afternoon. He expounds to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself (Mark xvi. 12, 13; Luke xxiv. 13-35).

5. To the ten apostles, in the evening. They have already the evidence of the women, of Peter, of Cleopas and his companion; He gives them the evidence of sight, touch, eating before them. He gives them mission, and the inbreathing of the Spirit, and the power of the Keys (Mark xvi. 14; Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19). All these appearances take place on Easter-Day.

6. To the eleven apostles, on the following Sunday, in the evening. Thomas is convinced, makes his confession of Christ's Godhead (John xx. 26).

7. To five apostles, and two others unnamed, at the Sea of Galilee, early in the morning. Typical miracle of the success of the fishers of men, reinstatement of Peter in the apostleship (John xxi. 1-24).

8. To above 500 brethren, including the apostles, on a mountain in Galilee. The great pre-appointed appearance to the Church. He gives His great commission to the Church, and His promise of His presence with it (Matt. xxviii. 16-20; Mark xvi. 15-18; 1 Cor. xv. 4).

9. To James (1 Cor. xv. 7).

10. To the eleven apostles, and perhaps other disciples, on the fortieth day, in the upper room in

Jerusalem. The Promise of the Comforter. The Ascension. The angelic message.¹

First, to study the evidential aspect of these appearances, "He showed himself alive by many infallible proofs." We cannot insist too strongly upon the importance of this view of the subject. The resurrection is the keystone of the arch of the evidence of Christ's character and mission. He had thrice over, when asked by the Jews for a sign from heaven to attest His claims, given them this sign, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . He spake of the temple of his body" (John ii. 19-21); "There shall no sign be given you but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40; xiv. 4). He had given the same assurance to His disciples: "From that time," viz., of Peter's confession of His divinity, "began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the chief priests and elders and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. xvi. 21, also xvii. 23 and

¹ Some of these appearances (3, 9) are not recorded in the Gospels, but are alluded to by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 5-7), and this at once suggests the possibility that there may have been other appearances which are nowhere mentioned. Indeed, the passage John xx. 30, 31, may allude to such other occasions.

xx. 19) ; for He said " I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again " (John x. 18). Had He not risen again, the world would have heard nothing more of Jesus of Nazareth. His rising again, " as he said," proved that He was what He professed to be,—God Incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us ; that His death had been, not a triumph of His enemies, but the voluntary Sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world ; that He was master of death and the grave.¹

Let us, then, briefly summarise the evidence of the Resurrection. And first, let us glance at the fact that our Lord was indeed mortal man, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone. He was born of a human mother, and received nourishment at her breast, He increased in stature and wisdom and grace, *i.e.*, He grew, physically, mentally, spiritually, like other children. Again, after the age of childhood, it is repeated that He grew into manhood, growing in favour with God and man. He lived the ordinary life of men for thirty years ; for three years, indeed, He led an extraordinary life, as Rabbi, Prophet, Worker of Miracles, but it was of the life of these three years that we are told how He hungered and thirsted, and ate and drank, and was weary and

¹ Taken from " Some Chief Truths of Religion," by the same author.

rested and slept, was moved with compassion and anger, sorrow and dread, and wept and prayed,—how at last He suffered physical, mental, and spiritual agony, and gave up the ghost and died. For thirty years and more there was nothing about Him, His appearance, His mode of life, which made those who knew Him suspect for a moment that He was other than man. So much so that when He began His ministry, those of “his own country,” *i.e.* of Nazareth, “were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? and they were offended in him” (Matt. xiii. 54–58). And again, subsequently, when the thought that there was something superhuman about Him was proposed to their minds, they rejected it at once, on the evidence of their own life-long knowledge of Him: “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?” (John vi. 42.)

And it was only gradually that His words and works wrought in the minds of those who were His constant companions the conviction that He was something more than man; and at length God gave them faith to recognise that He was God as well as man. But all through His life, all who knew Him,

from the mother who bore Him to the soldier who thrust his spear into His heart, never doubted that whatever else He might be,—prophet, Messiah, Son of God,—He was man.

2. We must glance briefly at the evidence that the man really died.

The histories assert it in the most unequivocal terms; all four evangelists tell us “he gave up the ghost,” the soul was separated from the body, which is the mystery of death.

His friends were convinced of His death; for having obtained His body from Pilate, and taken it down from the cross, they made no attempt to rekindle any lingering spark of life—how could any spark of life linger in a body which had a gaping spear-wound penetrating to the heart, which had already drained its life-blood?—but they laid it in the tomb, and prepared the ingredients for its embalmment. Their despondency at His death, their astonishment at the news of His resurrection, the incredulity of some, prove that they had no doubt of the reality of the death.

His enemies were convinced of it. We may be sure that “the chief priests and scribes and elders,” whose hatred had led them to forget dignity and decency, to join the crowd and flock out of the city to witness the crucifixion, and who challenged Him to descend from the cross, and save Himself, as he had saved others, from death, and so establish His claim

to their belief, would not have left Him till they were convinced that He was really dead. When they heard that Pilate had given up the body to His friends, they had no fear that His friends might resuscitate Him. They only feared that they might secrete the body, and pretend, in the absence of the corpse, that He had come to life again.

Impartial persons, whose official duty it was to ascertain the fact of the death, attested it. The Jews begged that the bodies might not remain exposed to view by one of the entrances into the city on the Sabbath of the Passover, and therefore the soldiers came and gave the *coup de grace* to the two robbers, and put an end to their torture. When they came to Jesus they saw that He was dead already, and did not treat Him as they had done the others; "but one of the soldiers," to make assurance doubly sure, "pierced his side with a spear, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." And when Joseph asked Pilate to allow the body to be surrendered to His friends, the governor " marvelled if he were already dead," and sent for the centurion who had superintended the execution, and only when assured that He was certainly dead, did he give permission.

Lastly, there is scientific evidence of the fact of death, for the only explanation of the recorded phenomena of the "blood and water" which followed the soldier's spear-thrust, is that the "great cry" was

the natural accompaniment of a rupture of the heart, and that the spear pierced the sac of the heart, and gave vent to the extravasated blood, which already had begun to coagulate; it was the separation of the serum from the red corpuscles which produced the appearance of blood and water; and that separation is conclusive evidence that death had already some little time taken place.

Next we examine the "infallible proofs" that it was the same Jesus who had died upon the cross who was afterward seen alive.

The evidence extends over forty days at various intervals, and the appearances were witnessed by more than 500 persons. Some of them, His chosen witnesses, saw Him again and again; *e.g.*, Peter not less than six times (*viz.*, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10).

The appearances were under a great variety of circumstances. He appeared usually without previous notice, but in the great appearance to the 500 after notice.

He appeared to single individuals (1, 3, 9), to two persons together (4), to groups of apostles and others (5, 6, 7, 8, 10), to 500 persons at once (8).

He appeared in a garden (1), in a room (5, 6, 10), walking along the road (4, 10), on the seashore (7), on a mountain (8, 10), in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10), in Galilee (7, 8).

In the early morning (1, 2, 7), at noon (10), in the afternoon (4), in the evening (5, 6). Five times in

the same day, the day of the resurrection, on that day week, at unknown intervals during forty days, on the fortieth day. It was never a mere transient apparition; He was always close by the witnesses, remained some time with them, talked with them, ate with them, they scrutinised the scars of His wounds (5, 6), they touched Him (2, 5, and perhaps 6), He breathed on them (5), He ascended from earth in their sight (10).

Another remarkable line of evidence that it was the same Jesus, besides this abundant identification of His body, consists in the identity of mental and moral character which is seen in the whole history. Some modification of bodily state and appearance there was before and after the resurrection, but the character displayed in every word and act of the forty days is absolutely identical with the character of the Jesus with whose previous life the Gospels have made us so well acquainted. In this moral identity even more than in the physical we have evidence of His declaration to His disciples, "It is I myself."¹

¹ It will be observed that all the appearances were to disciples only. There was no appearance to His enemies with a view to their conviction. This is in accordance with our Lord's repeated refusals to show them a sign from heaven; because that is not the way in which faith can be produced in the souls of unbelieving men. "If they believe not moral evidence, [Moses, and the prophets], neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

The testimony of the apostles to the fact of the resurrection was "confirmed by" miraculous "signs following."

And, lastly, perhaps, the most conclusive evidence of the Resurrection of the Lord is the existence of His Church, for the great doctrine on which it stands is His Deity, and the great fact is the Resurrection. It could never have existed and prevailed and continued if those foundations had not been sure.

The Resurrection is the central miracle of all the miracles of the Gospels and Acts. If that be rejected, all the others go with it; if that be established, all the others are easy after it. If Christ did not rise, then we are of all men most miserable; if Christ rose, then shall we also rise through Him.

The second characteristic of the Forty Days in St. Luke's summary is that the Lord was speaking to them of the things pertaining to "the kingdom of heaven."

He had said a little time before, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now." His death and resurrection had, however, done much to disabuse their minds of traditional misconceptions, and to prepare them to appreciate more truly the plan of Redemption and the nature of the kingdom. And now, in this interval, having done upon earth all that was needed to establish the broad and ever-during bases of the kingdom, and

being about to quit the world, and leave to His apostles the duty of building up the kingdom on the foundation He had laid, it was natural that He should speak to them about its principles, and give them directions as to its organisation. Not that our Lord necessarily, or probably, gave them minute directions as to all details. He promised that when the Holy Ghost came, He should guide them into all truth; and, doubtless, the organisation of the Church grew under the apostles' hands on the lines already laid down by the Lord, guided, as the occasion arose, by the Holy Ghost.

When we examine the words of the risen Lord, as recorded in the Gospels, we see how they fall into the order of St. Luke's summary.

Some of them are on the evidences of the Resurrection (4, 5, 6), the rest are all directed to the affairs of the kingdom. And this fact should not be passed over without notice, that what He talked to them about—or, at least, what the Holy Spirit has caused to be recorded of His conversations for our edification—is not the wonders of the under world, through which He had just passed, or the glories to which He was immediately going, but the affairs of the kingdom.

A very brief examination of the summary of the appearances on p. 528 will be enough to remind us of the various sayings pertaining to the kingdom.

At the first appearance (5) to the apostles whom He had long before selected and ordained, He gives them this mission, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;" and the afflatus of the Holy Spirit; and the Power of the Keys.

In the appearance (7) at the Sea of Galilee, the miracle and the meal are both symbolically prophetic of the future of the kingdom, and the discourse to Peter relates to the pastoral office.

In the appearance to the whole body of disciples (8), He bids the Church preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations,

Baptize¹ those who should believe, and declares belief and baptism the condition of salvation,

Teach all things which Christ had taught them;

Gave them the power of miracles for confirmation of their preaching,

Gave the promise of His continual presence with His Church.

In the last appearance (10) gave the promise of the Holy Spirit,

Prophesied the universal spread of the Gospel,

Ascended in their sight,

Gave by two angels the promise of His second coming.

¹ He had previously instituted the other Sacrament, and in several of the appearances there seem to be Eucharistic allusions, *e.g.*, at Emmaus, and at the Sea of Galilee.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE RISEN LIFE.

IN reading the narrative of these appearances, we are impressed with a sense that some mysterious change had taken place in our Lord's physical constitution and mode of life. Before, He was—as to His manhood—like other men, and lived like other men. Now, we are expressly told of two appearances (5, 6), that when “the doors were shut,” He suddenly “stood in the midst;” of another (4), we are expressly told that He suddenly “vanished out of their sight;” and the narrative of the other appearances seems to imply something of the same mysterious kind in His appearance and disappearance. Again, in the appearance on the way to Emmaus, we are expressly told that “He appeared in another form,” as well as that “their eyes were holden;” in that to Mary Magdalene the narrative seems to imply something of a similar kind.

It is the general belief of the Church¹ that the

¹ “It is,” says Stier (“Words of the Lord Jesus”), “the universal tradition of the Church,” “the universal belief of Christendom, that our Lord did not ascend to heaven on the

explanation of all this is that in our Lord's resurrection that change took place in the constitution of His body which will take place in all human bodies in the general resurrection; and that these mysterious phenomena are only consequences of the natural properties and powers of the "raised" or "spiritual," or "glorified" body.

This removes one difficulty in comprehending the declaration of Holy Scripture, that He was "the first-fruits of them that slept," whereas we have on record, three in the Old Testament and three in the New, who have been raised again from the dead. Theirs were cases of resuscitation, the soul returned into its old body, and they resumed their former life; His was the only true resurrection, for He rose with a spiritual body, and entered upon the higher phase of human life. His was not now (and henceforward) a sublimated and unreal humanity; He was still as truly, entirely, perfectly, man as when He lay in the cradle, or hung upon the cross; only He had entered into that higher phase of human nature which the redeemed will also enter into at the "Regeneration."¹

morning of the Resurrection, that He did not ascend until Ascension Day." The Forty Days were (probably) not merely for the sake of the Apostles and of the Church, but had some primary natural reason in the economy of the Lord's human life; or saving work.

¹ Matt. xix. 28.

It is from St. Paul that we learn most on the subject. In the famous 15th chapter of the 1st Book of Corinthians, he tells us the body is sown (in the grave) a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; and adds emphatically, "there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body," and goes on to illustrate it by the different nature of the bodies of warm-blooded beasts and of cold-blooded fishes; of beasts which walk upon the earth, and fishes which swim in the water, and birds which fly in the air. What he teaches is that in the resurrection we shall certainly have bodies, but that these bodies will be "spiritual;" by which he probably means of a more attenuated, ethereal substance, and with modified properties. The phenomena of our Lord's appearances seem to indicate some of these properties of the "spiritual body," of profound interest to us, for they give us glimpses of what we shall be hereafter, for "when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

We have spoken of the historical proofs, first, of His natural death, and then of His having been really seen alive again. It may be worth while to say a few words about the popular difficulty in receiving the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The difficulty is briefly and coarsely this: when a man dies, his body is chemically resolved into the material substances of which it is composed, and these very particles of matter are taken up again into

other organisations. So that the particles of matter which were once part of the body of a soldier, are taken up into the rank corn crops which grow on the battle-field where he was buried ; that corn made into bread becomes part of the body of another man, who, in turn, dies. At the resurrection, whose body shall these particles of matter belong to, for they once formed part of both their bodies ?

But the same science of physiology which teaches us these facts, teaches us also that our body is continually undergoing waste and repair of tissue ; every time we act, we waste a portion of muscle, every time we think, a portion of brain, every time we wash our hands, we wash away a portion of skin ; and, since with our civilised habits we do not waste away our nails fast enough, we are obliged, from time to time, to pare them. The substances of which our body is composed are continually being resolved into their constituents, and their place is being continually supplied by new matter. So that, the physiologists tell us, in a dozen years or so our body has been entirely changed, and yet the identity of the body remains.

The identity of the body, then, does not depend upon its being composed of the same particles of matter.

St. Paul's explanation of the subject in the famous chapter on the resurrection (1 Cor. xv.) is strictly scientific. He illustrates the matter by the analogy of vegetable life. "Thou sowest grain, it may chance

of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

What is a seed? Examine it under the microscope; let the chemist analyse it; let the physiologist describe it. And the total of our knowledge of it is that it consists of a germ and of a mass of matter gathered round the germ to be its first food. Place the seed under favourable circumstances, and the germ puts forth life, the same favourable circumstances convert this mass of food into a condition fit for the germ's use, and by the time it has consumed that, it has grown strong enough to gather additional food from the soil and water and air around it. It gathers what it needs, and rejects the rest. It moulds what it gathers into certain forms, and gradually constructs for itself stalk, leaf, ear, full corn in the ear. But every seed produces its own kind of plant. Plant a grain of wheat and a grain of barley side by side in the same soil, give them the same culture, yet one will produce a wheat plant and ear, the other a barley plant and ear; and no earthly power can make a grain of wheat produce anything else than wheat, a grain of barley anything else than barley.

Why? The germ, that mysterious source of life, has this property, it produces its own kind. St. Paul tells us every human being has a life-germ, and at the resurrection that germ will be placed under the

circumstances favourable to its germination, and then it will gather, not gradually, but at once, the elements it needs to build up for itself a new body, and that body its own body. Every man is an individual work of God. No two men are physically, mentally, spiritually alike; and at the resurrection—"the regeneration" St. Paul also calls it—a man's life-germ will no more produce an alien body, than a wheat-germ will produce a barley-plant. Wherein lies this germ of the human body? It is unphilosophical to suppose that it is a property of the mere matter of which a body is composed. It is independent of that matter. It is only the avowed materialist who will argue that everything belonging to a man—thought, reason, conscience, will—is a function of the mere matter of which his body is composed. It is a part of the life, that life which, at the separation of soul and body in death, goes not with his material frame, but with his soul—with himself.

"There are celestial bodies and there are bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. . . . Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are still alive at that day, shall, like the Lord Jesus] be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But there remains a further subject. These appearances of the Lord to the disciples occupy but a small portion of the forty days. Where was He in the mysterious intervals between these appearances, and how engaged? He was still truly man, therefore living some phase of true human life. He was not in heaven, for He said to Mary, "I am not yet ascended to my Father," and we know that He did not ascend until the fortieth day. He was still upon earth,—and how engaged? Who, before he has himself assumed his spiritual body, and has experience of the new life, can conjecture the conditions of that enlarged and glorified existence? But a raised and glorified man is still man, not essentially changed. We have had occasion to remark on the identity of our Lord's mental and moral and spiritual characteristics after and before His resurrection ; we may, then, thus grasping firmly the truth of His manhood, be suffered to think what meditations, what thanksgivings, must have occupied the days and nights of

such a man, who had passed through such a life! What prayers, perhaps what solemn preparations of the human soul and spirit, before the man ascended into the presence of God, before the Christ received His power and kingdom! If forty days of fasting prepared Him for the ministry, the forty days of the risen life may have been the fitting preparation for His ascension to His kingdom and glory.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ASCENSION.



WE now arrive at what we feel to be a fitting consummation of the earthly life and visible manifestation of the Emmanuel—the God with us. It was not necessary that the apostles should be witnesses of the act of the Resurrection, for their seeing Him after He had risen was as conclusive evidence of the fact as if they had seen Him rise; but had He, after the occasional mysterious appearances of the forty days, merely ceased to appear any more, having ascended unseen in secret, it might have left a vague and unsatisfied feeling in the minds of the apostles and of the Church. But He departed from the earth and ascended to heaven openly, in the sight of the witnesses chosen before, that they might testify of the great facts of His ministry to the world.

As our Lord had foreknown and foretold His sufferings, death, and rising again from the dead, so He had foreknown his ascension, and had spoken of it at a still earlier period. In the discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum He spoke plainly of it: “Doth this offend you” (viz, His declaration

that He came down from heaven, compare verse 41) ? "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before" (John vi. 62)? And immediately after His resurrection, in the first appearance, to Mary Magdalene, He spoke again of His ascension, and announced it as the next great event to occur: "I am not yet ascended to my Father." "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

It is very interesting to see how holy Scripture in various places and in various forms, in narrative, prophecy, psalm, epistle, and type, puts before us the various parts of this great transaction, and gives us a connected and authoritative history of it.

First we have the brief, plain narrative of the fact given by St. Luke (xxiv. 50), as it was witnessed by the apostles. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." We picture to ourselves the scene. The apostles had come up to keep the Feast of Pentecost. Jesus seems to have appeared in the midst of them as they were assembled together in their upper room in Jerusalem, as He had done on the evening of Easter-Day, and on the next Sunday evening. But on this occasion He did not vanish again out of

their sight, and leave them gazing at one another in wonder. He led them forth down from the upper room into the sunshine of the streets of the city—how they must have glanced at the passers by, wondering whether they would recognise Him; out of the city gate, along the road down the hillside, by which they had so often accompanied Him—it was like the old days when they were accustomed to journey with Him; past Gethsemane—not without recollections arising in every heart of what had happened there; so up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and a little way along the table-land until they approached familiar Bethany. Then when He paused they would gather round Him. He repeated the promise of the Comforter, and bade them not depart from Jerusalem until its fulfilment, which should be shortly:—

“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 baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts i. 4, 5).

And they asked Him a question, the last which the disciples put to their Master—

“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons¹ which the Father hath put in his own

¹ The periods or the epochs.

power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 6, 7, 8).

—words we shall have occasion to dwell upon hereafter. And while they were thus conversing with Him, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And while He was thus blessing them, He rose up from the midst of them, and slowly ascended, while they gazed ; and they watched Him for a brief while still ascending far above them, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. They have seen the last of their Lord ; but that last sight will rest in their memories evermore. His hands were still outstretched, blessing them and the world, while His eyes were already turned upwards towards the heaven to which He ascended.

But when the eye has ceased to see Him the reason still follows His ascent. It was a true human body, though in the condition of a spiritualised body, a body composed of material substance, however etherealised ; and it must, according to the essential property of matter, occupy some definite space, and pass by a true local translation from place to place. Our reason, then, still follows the ascending Lord beyond the cloud, and sees Him still ascend, beyond the moon, beyond the sun, "through the heavens" (Heb. iv. 14), "far above all heavens" (Eph. iv. 10), "into heaven

itself," the highest heaven, "there to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24).

St. Luke, in the fuller narrative of the Ascension, which forms the preface to the Acts of the Apostles, adds a very significant incident to the history. While the apostles still "looked steadfastly toward heaven," wrapt in silent wonder and awe, "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" (Acts i. 10, 11).

We have no doubt or difficulty in recognising who these two men in white apparel were. We call to mind that our Lord was attended by angels throughout His sojourn here, and their ministrations are revealed in certain great crises of the history. Gabriel announced the Incarnation, a multitude of the heavenly host attended the Nativity, and celebrated it with an anthem whose words are given to us by revelation (Luke ii. 13, 14). At the conclusion of the Fasting and Temptation, "behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. iv. 11). During the agony in the garden, "behold an angel appeared unto him, strengthening him" (Luke xxii. 43). He Himself said, at the time of His arrest, that He needed but to pray to the Father and He would send "twelve legions of angels" to His defence

(Matt. xxvi. 53). At the Resurrection "an angel descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men" (Matt. xxviii. 2, 3, 4). "Two men, in shining garments," announced to the women, "He is not here, he is risen" (Luke xxiv. 4). Mary saw "two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John xx. 11). St. Mark seems to speak of one of them when he describes "a young man sitting on the right side of the sepulchre clothed in a long white garment" (Mark xvi. 5).

We cannot doubt that these "two men in white apparel" were also angels attendant upon the Lord at this great crisis of His ascension. And with this clue the devout imagination easily realises the whole transaction. The angels who had attended His whole earthly career, with awe and wonder, at His humiliation and His suffering, with amazement and indignation, it may be, at the blindness and wickedness of man, seeking to understand¹ the mystery of love revealed in Redemption, waited cagerly upon

¹ "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter i. 12).

His departure from the scene of His humiliation, and welcomed His ascent to heaven with joyful triumph. The angelic anthem at the Nativity would suggest to us the probability of a similar triumphant anthem of return. But we are not left to conjecture. The twenty-fourth Psalm is assigned by the Church as one of the special Psalms for Ascension Day, and we do not doubt that in its concluding verses we have again revealed to us in prophecy the very words of the angel's song :—

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
 And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ;
 And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the King of glory ?

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
 And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ;
 And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the King of glory ?

The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

There is no difficulty in completing what is thus so plainly indicated. Just as there was a multitude of the heavenly host attending at the nativity, at first invisible, while one of them made the annunciation to the shepherds, and then they flashed into sight out of the darkness, and their song broke upon the stillness, and was heard by the shepherds sounding fainter and fainter as " they went away from them into heaven " (Luke ii. 15). So now the ascension was attended by

the hosts of angels, though they continued invisible and inaudible to the gazing apostles, except two who were detached by the Lord, and sent back with a farewell message to His disciples: a beautiful trait of His tender consideration, still thinking for His people even in this intense crisis of His own experience. The substance of that message we may consider another time, at present our hearts are following our Lord. The sight placed before us in the sacred scriptures is not the humble Jesus flitting silent and alone through the spheres. We may with great probability suppose that as the cloud (the Shekinah?) hid Him from the gaze of the apostles, His body put on its glory, the glory of which the three apostles were vouchsafed a glimpse on the Mount of Transfiguration, the glory with which John again beheld it in Patmos, when he saw one like unto the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle; His head and hair white as snow, with dazzling light, His eyes like flaming fire, His bare feet like glowing brass, His countenance like the sun shining at noon, His voice like the mellow sound of many waters (Rev. i. 12-17, compare Matt. xvii. 2; Mark ix. 2, 3; Luke ix. 29).

The heavenly host, not crowding in disorder about Him, but in ordered ranks—the very name “host” implies it—accompany Him; and thus in a grand

triumphal procession—compared with which the most gorgeous triumph of the Cæsars along the Via Sacra to the Capitol was but a train of ants creeping through the galleries of an ant-hill—the triumph of the Son of Man swept through the heavens, casting a new brightness upon the sun with its glory, and filling the vaults of heaven with the chant with which the victorious Lord was welcomed to His kingdom. And so Christ “entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. ix. 24).

And here at the entrance to the everlasting doors, when human imagination would tremblingly abstain from pressing further, God has been pleased to draw aside the veil and permit us to gaze into the royal halls of heaven, and be witnesses of the glory of the Son of Man to the end.

“The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. . . . I saw . . . and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. vii. 9, 10; 13, 14).

Hitherto we have looked on at our Lord's ascen-

sion as spectators of its outward incidents ; let us now regard it from another point of view which may help to complete our realisation of the true character of the glorious transaction.

There are some persons who quite fail to realise the truth of the incarnation of the Son of God, and who believe that at the ascension He threw aside the mask of humanity which had now fulfilled all its uses, and returned to heaven as He came down from heaven for our redemption. There are others who are better instructed in the truth that the two natures—the Divine and human—are indissolubly united in the Christ, who yet fail clearly and firmly to realise the truth of the humanity, and its consequences, at all times and under all circumstances, and it is, perhaps, especially at the ascension that their mental grasp of the humanity and its consequences becomes feeble and confused. Therefore, it is the more necessary here to call to mind that Our Lord was truly man as well as truly God, not a mysterious being of a mixed nature, partly human and partly divine—and, therefore, neither truly God nor man. His was a true human life, in all the phases through which it passed. We too shall die and rise again and ascend to heaven as our Lord did ; they are natural phases of human existence ; and in all the circumstances transcending ordinary human experience, which surrounded the death and resurrection and

ascension of our Lord, still his was a true human life in the midst of and through it all. St. Paul, speaking on the Arcopagus, said God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that *man* whom he hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31). And our Lord Himself says "God hath given him (*i.e.*, Jesus) authority to execute judgment also *because* he is the Son of Man" (John v. 27).

He knew beforehand of His ascension as He foreknew of His passion and death. And as the prospect of His passion had filled His human soul with trouble¹ and exceeding sorrow,² and His human will had shrunk back³ from the awful endurance of the expiation, so His human soul must have looked forward with longing to the ascension to heaven, to the entering into His kingdom and His glory. We see the evidence of it in the words of the Eucharistic prayer, "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that the Son also may glorify Thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" . . . He prizes His power because of the benefits it enables Him to give to His people, and so in looking forward to His glory, He desires to show it to, and share it with, His loved ones: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given

¹ John xii. 27.

² Matt. xxvi. 38.

³ Ibid. xxvi. 39, 41.

me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John xvii. 1, 24, 22).

The ascension was the foreseen consummation of the earthly life of Jesus. It was the reward of His holy and obedient life, the crown of the successful accomplishment of His mediatorial work. The apostle tells us it was *because*, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that, "*therefore* God hath very high exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Dare we attempt to enter into the human mind of Christ, and realise the exultation with which, when the time was fully come, He proceeded to leave the scene of His humiliation and His suffering, and to ascend to heaven, there to receive the kingdom over all things which He had won, there to share the glory of God. Hold firmly to the truth that He was very man. It was not only the Son of God who was going to return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and resume the universal dominion which He had before; it was the Son of Man who was going to be attended by the

angel hosts to the highest heaven, to be presented before God, and to receive from God the sceptre of universal and everlasting sovereignty, to be seated on the right hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter iii. 22). "According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph. i. 21), "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." This was "the Kingdom of Heaven" which the Divine Son of Man had won, not merely an earthly kingdom, though including that. This was the dazzling height for which we now see the long and painful discipline of His humanity in purity, humility, unselfishness, entire conformity to the will of God, was not too long and too severe a preparation.

But does Christ now rule the world with absolute unquestioned authority? It is evident that He does not yet. The present attitude of God and Christ towards the world is, in continuation of our subject, declared by another of the remarkable series of scriptures which have conducted us surely through all these glories of the unseen world:

Why do the heathen rage,
And the people imagine a vain thing ?
The kings of the earth set themselves up,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,
Let us break their bonds asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh :
The Lord shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure.
Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
I will declare the decree :
The Lord hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son ;
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for
thine inheritance,
And the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;
And dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
Be wise now therefore, O ye kings :
Be instructed, ye that are judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice unto him with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from
the way, when his wrath is kindled, yea but a little.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

This consummation of the earthly life of Jesus is too full of significance to be comprised in one line of thought. We enter, still under the distinct guidance of Holy Scripture, upon another.

The whole elaborate typical system of the sacrifices

of the ancient dispensation culminated in the ritual of the Day of Atonement, when the high priest annually offered a solemn sacrifice for the sins of the people. St. Paul describes it so far as is necessary for the present purpose, and points out its significance, in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. On that one day in the year alone, the high priest took of the blood of the special sacrifice slain at the great brazen altar, and passing through the court, through the ranks of the priests and Levites, entered into the Holy Place, and, still proceeding, entered into the Most Holy Place, and there offered the atoning blood before the Shekinah enthroned on the Mercy-seat, between the overshadowing wings of the cherubim. This, says the inspired apostle, was a type of Christ, who, "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood entered in once into the Holy Place," "entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix. 12, 24), for "this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the

people's ; for this he did once [for all] when he offered up himself" (Heb. vii. 24-28).

We are plainly taught, then, the significance of the Ascension from this point of view. The death of our Blessed Lord on the cross was the slaying of the Victim ; at the Ascension, the High Priest passed through the courts, "the heavenly places" of God's temple of the universe, into the heaven of heavens, "there to appear in the presence of God for us," to present the atoning blood before God ; and we are taught that this was the crowning act of the Atonement. And this great act was performed in the presence of the assembled angels. The Divine Man had come up from earth, and entered into the highest heaven, in order to make, in the presence of the angels—no unconcerned spectators—this great atonement for the sins of mankind.

A grand occasion, an august ceremonial, a great crisis—this one priestly act, of which all other offerings of all other priests are but types.

A priest, defines St. Paul, is "taken from among men, ordained for men in things pertaining to God." He fulfils a twofold function. He stands at the head of his people, and represents them before God in prayers and offerings. He turns round and faces the people, representing God to them in pardon and blessing. Our High Priest fitly represents man

because He is man, the second Adam, the natural head and representative of redeemed humanity. He fittingly represents God to man because He is God, and has the power of judgment and grace.

In that hour, when Jesus came up from earth, and presented His merits and sacrifice before the throne of grace, the atonement was completed. "Righteousness and Truth met together, Mercy and Peace kissed each other."

Again, call to mind that He was really man, and continues really man, having forgotten nothing of His human experiences during His sojourn upon earth. St. Paul beautifully points out one of the consequences,—“We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may find grace to help in time of need.”¹ “He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” and is “able to save evermore them that come unto God by him.”²

¹ Heb. iv. 15, 16.

² Ibid. vii. 25 (marginal reading).

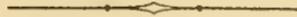
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