

BT

751

.W73

Library of Congress.

Chap.

BT 951

Shelf

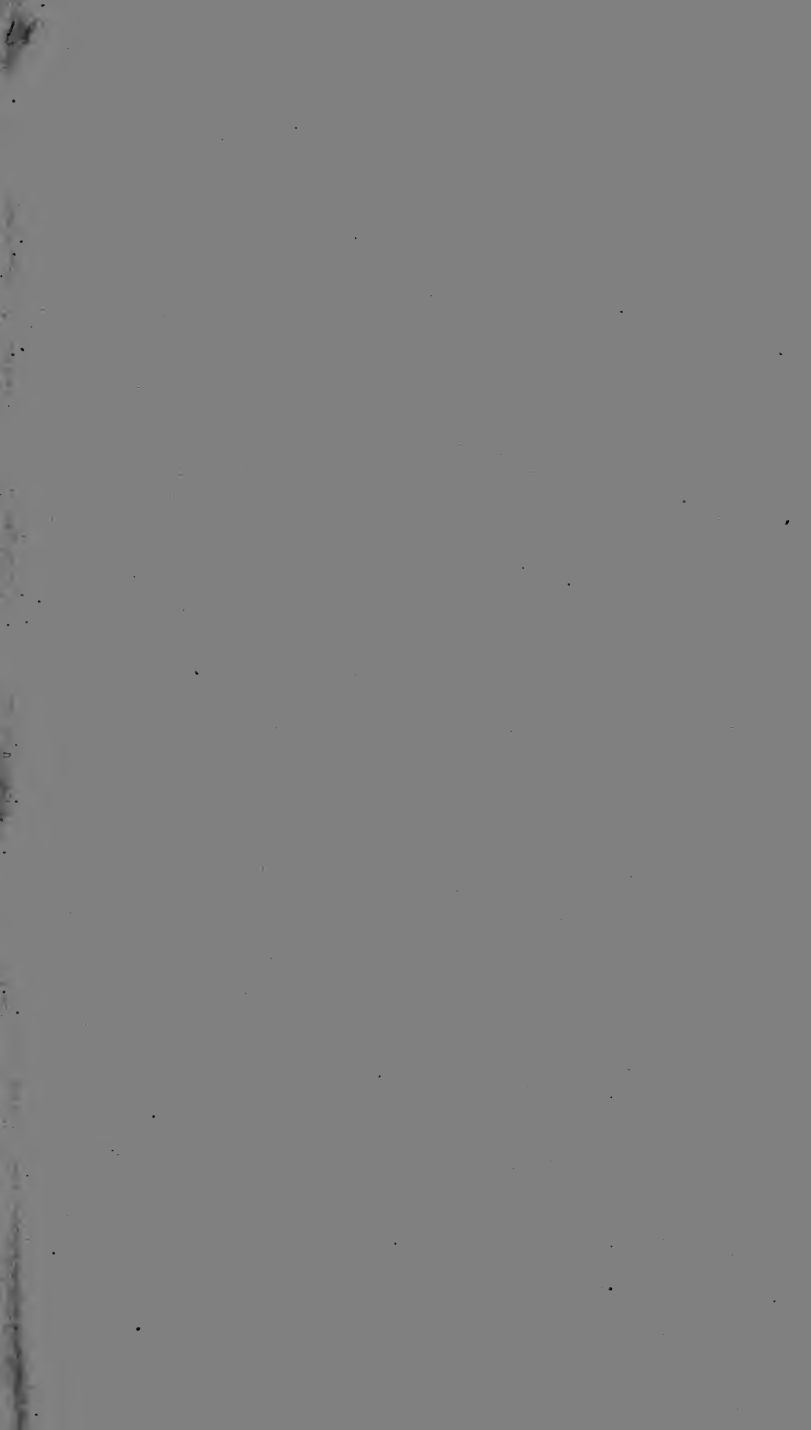
W 73

Copyright No.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







COLLEGE LIBRARY

GOD'S RESCUES.



11 C 37 23 70

GOD'S RESCUES;

OR,

THE LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN,
AND THE LOST SON.

THREE DISCOURSES

ON

LUKE XV.

BY WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS.

11



17

NEW YORK:
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & CO.,
770 BROADWAY, COR. 9th STREET.
1871.

BT 951
W 93

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & CO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

E. O. JENKINS,
STEREOTYPER AND PRINTER,
20 N. WILLIAM ST., N. Y.

ROBERT RUTTER,
BINDER,
84 BEEKMAN STREET.

HLR 29042

THE LOST SHEEP.

THEN DREW NEAR UNTO HIM ALL THE PUBLICANS AND SINNERS FOR TO HEAR HIM.

AND THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES MURMURED, SAYING, THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS, AND EATETH WITH THEM.

AND HE SPAKE THIS PARABLE UNTO THEM, SAYING,

WHAT MAN OF YOU, HAVING AN HUNDRED SHEEP, IF HE LOSE ONE OF THEM, DOTH NOT LEAVE THE NINETY AND NINE IN THE WILDERNESS, AND GO AFTER THAT WHICH IS LOST UNTIL HE FIND IT ?

AND WHEN HE HATH FOUND IT, HE LAYETH IT ON HIS SHOULDERS REJOICING.

AND WHEN HE COMETH HOME, HE CALLETH TOGETHER HIS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS, SAYING UNTO THEM, REJOICE WITH ME ; FOR I HAVE FOUND MY SHEEP WHICH WAS LOST.

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT LIKEWISE JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH, MORE THAN OVER NINETY AND NINE JUST PERSONS, WHICH NEED NO REPENTANCE.

—*Luke, chap. xv. 1-7.*

IN those catacombs at Rome, where the early Christians sheltered themselves from their Pagan persecutors, one of the favorite portrayals is that which presents the Saviour in the imagery of this parable. A shepherd is seen bearing a lamb flung across his shoulders. In the pictures and

coins of old Christian art, it is a frequent representation. One delineation, in these dark subterranean galleries, is supposed to be fifteen centuries old. It shows how, in days all saddened by recent bereavement and by impending martyrdom, the early confessors of the faith solaced themselves for the dark yesterday or darker to-morrow, by remembering the self-sacrificing tenderness, and the infinite carefulness, and the untiring might, and the illimitable resources, of the great God, their Redeemer and their Elder Brother—"The Chief Shepherd and Bishop of their souls"—as He is elsewhere called. That name, "Bishop," blends the images of the Overseer, the Guardian, the Rescuer, and the Avenger.

How touchingly is it introduced in the narrative of the Gospel. The Pharisees murmured—reputable and exemplary men as they deemed themselves—that one, claiming to be the Messiah, should be so accessible to the disreputable and the outcast. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth

with them." Their own idea of sanctity was, that it shunned the contact of such guilty and abject souls. For a John the Baptist, living sternly alone in the desert, far from the ordinary resorts and the everyday entanglements of society, the Pharisees might have some cold and distant respect. He might seem to them as shunning to be brushed by the world's ordinary throng of sinners, sacred in his reserve, and saintly in the very fact of his utter isolation.

But that the Baptist's Master should accept, from Zaccheus the publican, an invitation to dine beneath his roof—should enrol Matthew, another of that hated class, the tax-gatherer, the publican, among his Apostles; and should even permit a woman, that had been once notoriously a sinner, to bedew His feet with her tears, and wipe off the fast-flowing drops with her thick tresses, was in their view unbeseeming the dignity of His character and hardly to be reconciled with the sanctity of His mission.

Our Lord replies, by a matchless train of

parables. The first, that of the Lost Sheep; the second, that of the Lost Coin; and the last, that of the Lost Son; each bringing forward some new trait of anxiety for the souls ready to perish, and shedding, from some new point, another beam of hope on the path of the penitent.

The first parable presents the great doctrine of the Atonement, and the work of God the Son, as the Redeemer. It is a condensation of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Christ shown in His sacrifice and priestly intercession. The second parable brings out the lessons of the Gospel of John—the work of God the Holy Spirit, who convicts that He may convert, and disturbs, that He may comfort; like the besom sweeping off the dust, that has gathered in the heart and conscience, and upon the Bible and on the Book of Providence, and making all the soul for the time confused and discordant, and, as it may seem, even chaotic. But by the lamp, enlightening as well as confounding; searching out truths once dispar-

aged and neglected, and finding clues once utterly lost, and bringing to view treasures before unsuspected. So this parable brings out the great truths of Conversion and Regeneration. The last or third delineation, presents the great truths of Effectual Calling and Adoption and Justification, the lessons of the Epistle to the Romans. These are eminently the work of God the Father. Thus the three graphic sketches together blend the work of the Divine Trinity; and bring out the Full Godhead embodied in the work of human recovery.

As these similitudes go on, the appeal comes seemingly closer and closer home to the daily experience of His hearers, to their "business and bosoms." The husbandman hears of flocks; the housewife of besoms and lamps; and in the last parable, that of the returned prodigal, what an effectual knocking is there at the door of every human, and especially of every parental heart. It is God's statement of God's regard for the sinner, and of the high interest that

Heaven, though stainless and happy, has, through all its angelic ranks, in the work of the Lord of Angels to recover the estrayed, to win back the alienated, and to rescue the self-destroyed from the edge of the ruin to which they are rolling and plunging, with a fearful acceleration and desperate pertinacity.

Let us dwell on the first of these illustrations, Christ, the Good Shepherd. The feeling, which led the Scribes to their impeachment of our Lord's conduct toward sinners, is not yet died out. Men, who would scorn, as most unjust, all comparison of themselves with the old Pharisees, are yet, after the interval of so many centuries, repeating in our times and beside our sanctuaries, the old cavil. Are the doctrines of grace earnestly and freely pressed on all mankind? Is it said from the pulpit and the press, that salvation has, by the death of Christ, been purchased for the vilest, and that men may, turning from themselves and accepting His grace and yoke, be at

once and altogether pardoned, and be perfectly and forever justified? How many censure this as preaching impunity to sin, and as bidding a perilous welcome to the world's veriest outcasts and reprobates. It is said to be a degradation of religion, and a wrong done to the moral and exemplary, to represent this as the mode of man's access to God; and to paint the way to Heaven, as being thus, only by the Righteousness of Another, and by the blood of His one great propitiatory sacrifice.

“Is it thus with Christ that He receiveth sinners?” exclaim they. Or, does the Christian church send forth her chosen sons and daughters, and call for the gifts and prayers of her membership, to evangelize the degraded; and to recognize humanity in the brutified, who are dwelling, perhaps, on some barbarian and remote coast, and in savage, squalid guise, tenanted some cannibal isle? Is it not, even yet, too common to hear, against such enterprise, the cavil, and from some, the fierce taunt, and the flippant

sneer, at this anxiety for such remote, and such uncouth, and such unpromising specimens of the human family? Why, it is asked, should your Christianity go so far; and busy itself with such repulsive Paganism, ignorant of the first principles of letters, and arts and laws, touching nearly the line of kinship to the beast? And yet, in all this, does not the church of our times tread in the steps of that Good Shepherd, who went much further, and renounced much more; who, leaving the ninety and nine, is seen to go in quest of the one estrayed and perishing, dear to Him, in its very destitution, misery and peril? Does not His love need access to the misery, because the misery so sorely needs that love?

So in the revelations of Modern Science, as to the extent of the celestial system, when worlds, more massive than our own, are seen peopling by myriads, the depths of space, and the mind begins to reel under the contemplation of the hosts of orbs, that God has formed, and of the intelligent

beings that possibly may tenant them, the conclusion has been drawn, Why should we think, that to our little paltry globe, a narrow nook in the vast realm of being, and that to our ephemeral race, so insignificant and morally so unworthy of special regard from God, there should be sent an Incarnation of the Creator and a Revelation of the God who made all this teeming universe? Is not this sending far, and overlooking much that was more worthy of notice elsewhere, for God to come down and tabernacle on our planet, and in our mortal, suffering nature? Why expect the Infinite One to seek this tiny spangle of a globe, and here to visit and to receive such forlorn sinners?

Yes—in the cavils against the doctrines of grace—in the pleadings against modern missions to the heathen—in some of the popular objections from the extent of the universe, against the worthiness of our planet and of our race to receive an embassy from the Incarnate God—we see but the old

Pharisaic accusation, restated with some new phraseology. But the core of the objection is the same. You make God stoop too low ; and let man, the petty, the guilty, and the perishable, presume on hopes that are preposterously too large and too lofty.

II. See, then, how simply, and yet overwhelmingly, God replies. The Shepherd, the Incarnate Son, the Perfect Resemblance and Express Image of the Father, and the Embodiment of the Infinite Godhead, He puts, to the men and women about Him, an appeal coming home to the histories of their own farms and pasture grounds, to the incidents of those very homes whence they had just come out to listen, and to which, when they had heard Him through, they would be soon returning. Here is a shepherd, the owner of a flock of a hundred sheep. They had been feeding in the wilderness. By this, we suppose, intended, not a bleak, desolate wild ; but a pasture, like those unfenced commons stretching out for leagues, to which, in the old world, sheep are often

driven, like our own wide prairies of the West. From his flock, one sheep is missing. It has quitted its fellows. When they come to be counted at even, it is not found. In its defencelessness and wilfulness or witlessness, it is little likely to return ; and, if encountering the wolf or the lion, its fate is fixed. It can neither escape by fight nor by flight. It has gone nibbling the grass, bleating in its loneliness, and straying in its bewilderment ; and now, as the night gathers and the shadows deepen, whither is it tending, and what shall become of it ? The shepherd stops not to reckon. He does not say, It is but a small proportion of the flock ; its course is uncertain, and who can tell in what direction to seek it ? I can well afford to lose it. As for it, it well deserves its fate ; let it perish. To go in quest of it, were to incur certain fatigue, with very slender and uncertain prospects of any success. Why should I vex myself, and encounter in mountain passes, a pit, dark and deep, that may engulf me ; or

some savage beast of prey, that might assail me? But, dashing aside all such pretexts, the shepherd, who, in his pity cannot afford that the poor beast perish, leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness pastures, and as Matthew states it, "goeth into the mountains," where many a rough steep must be clambered, and many a precipice may yawn for the unguarded foot, and many a den may harbor its noxious serpents, or its ferocious beasts of prey. Toil, peril, and discomfort, are braved. The poor waif is found. And when found, how is it treated? Is it butchered and flayed on the spot, and its skin borne home to be nailed on the gate of the fold, or the great barn door, a warning to all the rest of the flock of the consequences and penalties of straying? Is the crook broken heavily over its shoulder, as a punishment and a warning to itself though its life is spared; a monition against future wanderings? Is the hot branding-iron promptly applied, singeing the fleece, and burning down its way into

the quick, quivering flesh of the poor animal? Or, is the watch-dog set on the poor silly sheep to flesh his white tooth in the side of the sheep, and to frighten it into a full, indelible remembrance of its present folly? Or, does the shepherd, angry at the time wasted, and the labor incurred, drive the exhausted beast, bleeding and panting, and foot-sore, rapidly back along the homeward way? No. He is, however tired, willing to be yet more fatigued, so that his poor charge be saved from further exhaustion, and from continued exposure to peril. He lays it on his shoulders, not with upbraiding and grudging, chiding at its folly, but rejoicing at the recovery. And, reaching home he summons his neighbors to congratulate him, and rejoice with him, over the success of his pursuit and the restoration, to its fellows and to its fold, of his estrayed and imperilled charge.

“I say unto you,”—I, Jesus, the Son of the Father, ever in the Father’s bosom, and fully in the Father’s confidence; I, Jesus, the

Lord of Angels, intimately acquainted with all their employments, and cognizant of all their angelic sympathies; I, the Maker of your race on the earth, and of their shining ranks on high, the Creator also, utter it. I say unto you: "there is joy," in that bright, far, and holy heaven, among its white-robed and holy tenantry, over one such sinner that comes penitent to my teachings, and sits, docile and contrite at my feet, however degraded his past condition and however vile his offences, and however forlorn his aspect and his prospects, there is more joy in the world of light over him, than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance. Who are they? The self-righteous, who suppose themselves so just as to need no contrition? Elsewhere, the Saviour speaks of such righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees; and declares, that if His disciples do not attain a righteousness surpassing such low standard, they cannot enter heaven at all. Such Pharisaic excellence would move angels to tears rather than to songs. Who

then are the just? We suppose the more proper allusion, to be to the angels, who, keeping their first estate, have never sinned; or, if there be other beings like man, inhabiting other worlds, whose Eden was never marred and forfeited by sin, then we are taught, that over their permanence in holiness, there is not the loud acclaim of joy, that there is over each and every conversion of a sinner from our own lost and doomed race.

We sometimes wish the privilege of reading our neighbor's heart. But here, opened by the hand of the Incarnate Revealer and Redeemer, we have a window into the very heart of God. We see His feelings of compassion towards our race and our own selves. He leaves the society of the sinless and the angelic, and the anthems of seraphim and cherubim, and the communion of heaven, for an earthly allotment of toil and exposure. He must traverse "dark mountains," when He confronts the contradiction of sinners and the assaults of the

tempter, and He becomes denied of earth and buffeted of hell. To lift the victim of sin, and the heir of wrath, to His shoulders, as the recovered and ransomed one, that shoulder must bear the cross of shame and agony; that soul of His must stoop to the yoke of denial, mockery and betrayal. He must encounter the hidings of the face of the Father. Weary He sits at the well of Samaria. But more weary, He faints under the weight of the cross they have made Him bear. More weary, hangs He, nailed to its wood; the jeer, the shout, the blasphemy, all jangling wildly in His ears, as He is ready to give up the ghost, crying in His extremity, as the God-forsaken one, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabacthani! My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

And this Redemption is not all. He is, as the High Priest, now and after His exaltation to the heavenly glory, still the burden bearer of His people. In His providence, He brings them back from their impenitent estrayment. "He restoreth my

soul," said David. He bears them about, through all the tangled pathway of life, as a nurse her infant; nor when mothers forget the babe of their love, can He forget. He cherishes for them a vivid and lasting sympathy. In all their affliction, He is afflicted, never fails or forsakes them, to old age and into death; still sustains, still cherishes, and still defends them. The High Priest of the Jewish Economy had the breast-plate, with its twelve jewels, bearing the names of the twelve tribes, supported by bands that passed over His shoulders. The names of Judah and Levi and their brethren thus lay on his heart; whilst the weight of the record and the memorial was pressing on His shoulder. The heart, the seat of feeling; the shoulders are the seat of strength. Affection and Power are shown thus, blended together in undertaking the cause, and sustaining the remembrance of his people. So is it in the great Antitype. His shoulder of Omnipotence sustains, and His bosom, with its Infinite

Tenderness and unforgetting Omniscience, registers and defends His own Israel. "The Great Shepherd of the Sheep," as the Apostle entitles Him, has shed His blood not idly and ineffectually, but as the gory sanction, "the blood of an Everlasting Covenant."

III. But why should there be more joy over the recovery of the fallen, than over the preservation of the unfallen? We answer, in part, because it is here, as in human relationship, where the mother seems most to love the child whose sickness has cost her most alarms and watchings, and drawn most heavily on her maternal tenderness. Just as in the strifes of life, you attach new importance and value to the interests that had been threatened, to the venture that had been nearly wrecked, and that was, with effort and risk, secured again. Just as in the dying benediction of Jacob, he reserves for his favorite Joseph a portion, especially dear to the patriarch, which he, the father, had taken with his sword and his

bow out of the hand of the alien. The struggle had made that one of the dearest of Jacob's possessions. Not only was Labor wrought into the boon, but Valor also, and Endurance. Just as in your national affairs, Liberty and Union will acquire new preciousness from the expenditure of treasure and blood required to vindicate and secure them, and from the taunts and insults of Old World despotism over your expected loss of these rich franchises.

But, we suppose, that for the high joy of angels there is another reason. They might, themselves, never have been so effectually guarded against the approach of sin to themselves; so thoroughly encased against all temptations to emulate the treason and join the revolt of their old associate and compeer Lucifer, had not the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son shown the evil of sin; had not the punishment of evil men and evil angels so illustrated God's wrath against iniquity.

The tininess of our planet, it may be, is

not preventing it from serving as the great battle-field of God's moral universe. How oft a spot of military encounter, itself not larger than one of the city wards, may yet in our recent national struggle, have decided, by the battle there fought, the political destinies of the broad continent. So it is in God's government of our world and race. On our small nook of a globe, may yet gather and centre all the solitudes of Heaven, and all the fierce hopes of Hell. Good and evil may come here, into one long and dread death-grapple. The Apostle said, he was a spectacle to men and angels. And all the church on earth, widely dispersed and variously schooled, affords a spectacle of divine wisdom and faithfulness, into which angels, stooping down, desire to look, catching thus profounder glimpses than the Godhead, not enshrouded and not incarnate, elsewhere allows them. These angels of light might have swerved, had not Christ's care and skill, in saving the saved of earth, so de-

veloped new wonders of Divine Truth and Grace, before unsuspected.

In Christ, and in Christ's Church, the heavenly powers see more glorious exhibitions than elsewhere of the excellence of Jehovah, and every new convert is a great trophy, having its own new and peculiar memorial of the Redeemer's goodness and gentleness and forbearance.

Angels rejoice, again, with an especial exultation at Christ's work, because of their full and adoring sympathy with the Lord of Angels and men. Now Christ rejoiced in spirit at the revelation of the Father to "babes and sucklings;" that mere lambs, estrays from the flock of the Holy, should be made more than conquerors over him who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, was matter of exultation to Christ. He is "anointed with joy above His fellows," in His mediatorial work. Angels sympathize with Jesus, from their admiring adoration of His nature and His career. They minister to the heirs of

salvation. They did to the disembodied spirit of Lazarus, borne from the gate of Dives; and fresh from the dunghill where his body grovelled, his spirit mounts, on their wings and under their escort, to the fields of light, to meet and to enhance the hymns of just men made perfect.

Because of its revelation of the Divine Nature, because of their own surer confirmation in holiness by the great drama of Human Redemption, and because of their full sympathy with Jesus, who rejoices in His own kingly and priestly triumph as head of the church, there is especial joy among angels over every journey of the Good Shepherd to rescue His lost and perishing charge.

Now, brethren, beloved in the Lord, are we Christ's? We have, in such case, His spirit. What joy to serve such a Master! But, if imbued with His temper, we go forth to seek the lost. The world's mountains of error and wrong, and care and toil, and persecution and blasphemy, must be

threaded. The gospel is an aggressive and itinerant onslaught of mercy as upon earth's sinners, the vile, the forlorn, the outcast, the barbarous. Its messengers go out into the highways and hedges, by the Master's express commission and charge. It reaches the far. It grasps the self-destroyed. It hopes for the hopeless. It pities the pitiless. It weeps and prays and loves, though confronted by the unlovely and unloving.

Are you a Christian, sad and ready to faint, because of the difficulties of the path? Do life's uncertainties perplex you; and is the strength fast waning, and are heart and flesh ready to fail? Look away to the sympathies of Jesus. Fling yourselves on the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Are you laboring in His service, and to meet, in return, often misrepresentation and wrong? Look up. It is not, on your part, going as far, or bearing as much, as the Master went, and as the Master bore, on your behalf. "The joy set before Him," sustained Him. Let its anticipation cheer and hearten you.

It is glad, and sure, and inconceivably near.

Are you a sinner, living reckless of Christ, and His calls, and His vast claims on your gratitude? Remember your exposure to enemies, whom you are not adequate to outwit and to repel. The Shepherd's quest, on the part of the Redeemer, goes on. You shun it, and you slight it. But, side by side, with the Redeemer's quest of souls, goes on the great Wolf Hunt; the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, in their terrible leash of lying, hate and desolation, sweep roaring by; and you are sure, if continuing away from Christ, to be entangled among their rushing troop, and to be destroyed a helpless victim in their destruction that tarrieth not. And with what plea, will you shelter your ingratitude to Christ, and your criminal and habitual and life-long denial of His right to your affection and your trust? Well might the stout old sage and moralist of England, Samuel Johnson, burst into tears, as he habitually did, when recall-

ing the image of our text as given in the old mediæval Judgment Hymn, in that verse which runs :

“ Wearily for me Thou soughtest :
On the cross my soul Thou boughtest ;
Lose not all for which Thou wroughtest.”

THE LOST COIN.



EITHER WHAT WOMAN, HAVING TEN PIECES OF SILVER, IF SHE LOSE ONE PIECE, DOETH NOT LIGHT A CANDLE, AND SWEEP THE HOUSE, AND SEEK DILIGENTLY TILL SHE FIND IT ?

AND WHEN SHE HATH FOUND IT, SHE CALLETH HER FRIENDS AND HER NEIGHBOURS TOGETHER, SAYING, REJOICE WITH ME ; FOR I HAVE FOUND THE PIECE WHICH I HAD LOST.

LIKEWISE, I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH.

—*Luke, chap. xv. 8-10.*

AMONGST the hearers of our Lord were those of either sex. Some were thus, as herdsmen and tillers, busied in the field, owned flocks, and drove plows ; others, the mothers and sisters, wives and daughters of these, had the circle of their activities and anxieties mainly within the narrower limits of the home. To this last home-keeping class speaks his next illustration. Do the Pharisees murmur at His ready welcome of the sinner, lost to God, and lost to his fellows, and lost to himself, but by grace to be reclaimed ? He appeals

to their own modes of dealing with losses far more petty in character. And, by that quiet gradation which chains together so many of our Lord's sentences, He, who had begun with a loss in men's stables and out-lying sheepfolds, comes now down to a loss out of the purse borne about the person, and stowed in the girdle: as, in the next parable, He goes yet closer to the soul, in picturing a loss amongst the rarest and costliest of the heart's treasures, dearer than herds, dearer than revenues—a man's own guarded and cherished offspring. What Lord Bacon called a bringing home of wisdom "to men's business and bosoms," was, in our Lord, exhibited in a simpler mode, but on a grander scale. Thus His parables travelled here, from the farmer's live-stock and sheepfolds to the purse borne at the girdle; and then from the purse to the heart beating under that girdle, into the longing, yearning, smitten soul of a father, who had nourished and brought up children, but had hoped and waited, toiled, ac-

cumulated, endowed and lavished, only to see his bounties toward his children wasted, and his affection for them requited by sullen, base ingratitude.

The parables of sheep and coin touched "business." The parable of the prodigal shot into the "bosom." The first illustration brushed the skirts, the last tugged at the heart-strings. And so, too, He deepens the relative amount of the loss as He proceeds. Of the flock, but one was missing, and nigh a hundred were left. Out of the purse had gone not a hundredth coin merely, leaving ninety and nine behind, but a whole tenth of its contents. Out of the family was a Joseph missing; but were eleven brothers and a sister left to replace the one absent? There had gone, not only a tenth child, leaving nine brothers and sisters to replace his alienation; but the one-half of the branches of the household tree are lopped off. The homestead is half unroofed. It is a Jacob who has no Judah, and no Dan, and no Reuben, and no Simeon. He

has but a Joseph and a Benjamin ; and that youngest born, his Benjamin, is not ; for he had turned ingrate, and sot, and outcast, flung into a remote exile of his own choosing, and wrapt in a sad infamy of his own weaving.

So, too, does our Lord deepen the shades of guilt imputed to the offender in the sin that has made him lost to God and rendered him an estray from peace and an outcast from hope. A sheep wanders from the fold : it is a fit emblem of the thoughtless sinner, erring through weakness and silliness rather than of design. A sheep may inarticulately confess and implore, when it bleats for compassion. But the coin dropped ; what power has it of guiding its own return, of proclaiming its sense of abandonment, and of speaking out the rights of its real and only owner ? Utterly dependent on that owner's care for a recovery, and it all turning on the will of the first finder whether the coin is to be embezzled or to be restored to its own original place and

proprietor, does not the dull helplessness of the poor piece of money well bespeak the desperate condition of a sinner morally disabled—helpless by his obduracy, who has neither skill, nor will, nor transient wish to return to God, but whom sin has brutified and blinded into such utter insensibility, about his own danger and about God's wrath, that over him Sabbaths and Providences and Scriptures roll unnoted, as they would over a shilling stamped into the mire and covered with the dust of successive weeks and years. And so in the forlorn prodigal, how has the Saviour depicted the wilful and conscious sinner deliberately, and persistently, and habitually multiplying his offences, squandering all his past privileges, and scorning all his earlier mercies. First have we the thoughtless, and next the helpless, and lastly the wilful sinner; yet, tracking the transgressor through all these degrees of deepened and indurated and desperate iniquity, God's mercy is seen letting itself down, past

thoughtlessness and helplessness and wilfulness, as by the successive shelvings of the abyss of estrangement and peril and depravity, into which the sinner has rolled himself. Does he plunge from one ledge to a deeper, and is the cavernous gloom of the pit grown more horribly dark as he descends? God comes down, and with an infinite compassion, adorable to all eternity, is He seen "devising methods how His banished ones may return." He is scheming that His lost ones may be re-installed, and how they may be regenerated, that they may be fittingly and be permanently re-instated in the renounced household and homestead.

And as, in that great scheme of human recovery, the gospel of the great salvation, the whole of the Divine Trinity was embarked, so these several parables, here interlocked, seem to allude each primarily to the work of one as distinguished from the others of the persons of the Divine Trinity. They present, the first, the Atoning Son; and the third, the call—effectual to recall,

to adopt, and to justify—the call of the Eternal Father; so does this intervening parable that stands midway between the others, and upon which our thoughts now fix, seem to paint the offices of the Holy Spirit, the Enlightener, the Disturber or Reprover, and the Seeker of the souls that lay buried in the gloom of ignorance and the quiet dust of worldliness, and under the litter and the defilement of sin. It is the Spirit that builds and that orders the House of God; and his prerogative it especially is, by an effectual severing, to quarry out the living stones for the Heavenly Temple, to search out, from the ruins of the Fall, God's elect ones, who are, in the day of reckoning, to be counted among His jewels, and to be eternally treasured in His heavenly kingdom. And as specially answering to these, the Spirit's peculiar offices, as the type of the Divine Regeneration, following close on the Divine Redemption, it seems fitting to put that one of the three images used by our Lord as to man's lost estate,

which most vividly describes man's pitiful and utter helplessness, in this next or second place. The Spirit follows the Son; Pentecost succeeded Calvary. It is the image of a silver coin rolled away into obscurity, hidden in the dust and gloom. Amidst the bones last gnawed and splintered by the dogs in yon corner, there lies, it may be, this coin beside the crusts dropped by the children, or under the dust and mud brought in from the highway. Man needs repentance. The Son of God provided for the bestowment of that penitence, being Himself "exalted as a Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins." The Father welcomes the exhibition and exercise of that repentance. But it is the Spirit of God who works the repentance itself, who inspires the contrite desire, and who sheds around the sepulchre of our spiritual death, and wafts down upon this moral decay, that light of life—that breath of heaven—which disperses the gloom, and arrests the corruption, and banishes the inert silence and

apathy. It is the Spirit who restores to God's treasure-house that soul, which, at first, was coined in God's image, and garnered for his revenues, but which has since escaped, helplessly and hopelessly, from His service, to be trodden in the dust, and to be swept into the indiscriminate offscourings "whose end is to be burned," had not mercy thus interposed.

We suppose, indeed, it not an untenable opinion, which many ancient worthies have held, that the Spirit is represented, especially, as working in the Church of God; and that, therefore, the laborer in the imagery of this parable is of that sex which is selected so often to describe in the Bible the Church of the Most High. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it?" Woman is, in the family life, especially designed of God, who orders the household; to be the economist. Her thrift, and care, and forethought may build the

family: as her waste and pride and sloth and luxury may desolate and shatter it. She is presented here, not as a princess whose bracelet has lost one pearl from its appropriate setting, and who is perplexed how to fill up the vacant socket: or a daughter of Herodias, who is apparelling herself for the dance before the chief estates of the kingdom, and who finds the diamond frontlet for her brow to have been in some way misplaced. It is a simple peasant-wife, whose whole store is but some ten silver coins, none large in size. One is wanting; she believes it, though missing, yet in the house. The cottage homes of Palestine, in which our Lord so often lodged, and in one of which He was reared at Nazareth, are often furnished only with a floor of the hard earth, and the chambers are often lit only by windows high up in the wall, like the narrow slits and loop-holes of our barns, admitting but little of the outer sun-light. Indeed, many of the ancient homes had no light but by the door. On the hard, beaten earth,

coin or trinket once dropped may be soon covered among the litter, brought in by the sandals of the traveller, or the crumbs and fragments flung to the dogs or the household animals, when these are permitted to enter. Perhaps the little store of savings, the ten pieces of money, thus lessened, had been laid up to meet the rent-day. Perhaps it was the hard-won wages earned by some child who served in the neighbors' fields, and brought the scant, slow gains to a mother to keep,—some Ruth, who gleaned after the reapers of a neighbor Boaz, or some Jacob who kept sheep in the wilderness pastures for some covetous Laban. One piece is lacking. She trusts that it has not yet gone from the house. If the windows give not light enough to search each nook, the lamp is lit. If the dust might conceal it, the floor shall be swept, great as may be the cloud raised by the broom to overspread the apartment. And “diligently,” or repeatedly, and everywhere, and continually, will the owner search until she

finds it. So has God, by His Spirit, sent the Light of Revelation into the world, and especially into the Church. So has He, in that Church, by the faithful preaching of the word, and by its dissemination as the written word also, beamed light into the old darkness and across the settled unconcern of society. So has He, in dealing with the individual soul, shot rays of searching light into the conscience and heart. The insensate Ahab starts at feeling that his "enemy," the truth, has "found him out." The unbelieving Jew has been pierced to the soul in the sense of his sin and its ruinousness and heinousness. Lydia has had her heart opened to receive the truth, as the flower opens to the morning beams of the summer sun. The jailer, late so fierce and brutal, with a heart torn open like a rock riven by the earthquake, cries out in alarm: What shall I do to be saved?—as he discerns his hideous mistakes, and shudders at the new light streaming in, to show his guilt and his hardihood, and to lay bare the nearness of

eternal death, of which he had been so bristfully unconscious.

And as mere habit and neglect hide souls from themselves, and from the just sympathy and care of their fellows, God's Spirit sends its great disturbing agencies into the society, the nation, the age, or into the narrower bounds of the family. The besom does not really make the new dust; but it only brings the old and long-gathering deposit more, for a time, into the air and upon the lungs. The messengers of the Gospel are, for the time, regarded as "turning the world upside down." Or God's providences, in calamities, and wars, and social revolutions, show men the magnitude of past hereditary errors. The besom of judgment goes shaking society out of its torpor and equanimity. It was so in Luther's day, and in Calvin's. It was so in the Puritans of our ancestral Britain, and in their colonists who crossed to this country. God, by them, broke up many a pile of quiet litter; and brushed aside many a film of long-set-

tled green mould, picturesque in its verdure, or venerable in its grey, hoar antiquity, which had gathered upon the national conscience. But a Bunyan, and a Milton, and a Baxter, and an Owen, and a Howe were precious medals brought out by the besoming; and Constitutional freedom and National morality, and English literature, and Christian piety were greatly enriched by the agitation. It was so in the Revolution that made us a nation. It was so in the agitations that went over Europe in the train of our first Revolution. It was so in our last great struggle. It has been so in Modern Missions. Would you put that shaking and besoming peremptorily and effectually down? We hear, behind the turmoil and the thick streaming clouds of dust, as God's great besoms sweep along, the words of an august cry: "I will overturn, and overturn, and overturn until He, whose right it is to reign, shall come." That voice uttered the thunders of Sinai. It will not be safe, men of the earth, to lay your hands

or try your potent edicts on His dread besoming. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth ; but woe to him who contendeth with his Maker. God is sweeping us as a nation. The ancient and dust-covered must bear the touch of God's rough rods when commissioned of Him, as they scrape and scatter and shiver. And how often has God used sore trials, to shake the unbelieving and impenitent heart out of its fatal security ! Your business is unremunerative. Your debtors fail : your own debts grow unmanageable. Your friends are sick, or far, or they grow feeble and unreliable. Some darling child is visited with deadly sickness. The circle that once girt the table of home is broken, and a void place is left at the hearth and the board, never to be filled again by its revered and endeared occupant. Or, your own bodily strength fails, and your mind grows despondent and irresolute. And yet, how often in just such scenes of disappointment, bereavement and sore distress, has God

given you to know the true emptiness of earth and the indescribable excellence of Christ and his salvation. He has whirled—rudely, fiercely, you think—away, all the old peace and ease. But He is only besom-ing the habitation to recover the jewel. He is filling the old familiar scenes with a whirl-wind of cares and frettings and anxieties, to show thee in this brief, sharp way, the brightness of a better hope than earth ever bred, and to let in the undying light of Grace and Redemption on thy faint, dark soul, and on the death-bed and the grave and the far Eternity which lie before thee.

God, in His enlightening and His dis-turbing agencies, is bidding the people and His churches, to seek out, and is Himself, drawing out lost souls. These times of agi-tation may become seasons of great moral renovation. The church should, in her own bounds, look for the lost—the neglect-ed—the overlooked—the estrayed—the dis-regarded, and the down-trodden. Her Lord's jewels may be amongst these sweep-

ings. So Carey, and Fuller, and Ryland, and Sutcliffe, looked over seas and continents to the Bengalee sweepings in the Indian chambers of the wide imperial dominions of Britain. What spoils for Heaven—what new gems for the Saviour's mediatorial crown, did they not find, rewarding the search. So Judson, and Boardman, and Vinton, labored for the Burman and Karen. And so, at home, the Sabbath-school Teacher, and the Tract Visitor, and the Home Missionary, may find, and should seek diligently and prayerfully until they do find, the lost, that are their Master's, in the wide wastes of the neglect and squalor and ignorance and destitution of our great cities. So may battle-fields and hospitals and moving armies, have going through them, the quest of Christian sympathy, and Christian labor, and Christian prayer, and Christian generosity, and Christian brotherhood, and Christian patriotism. Who shall calculate the gains thus secured to Christs' cause?

The Spirit convinces of sin. His first

lessons are of necessity, then, humiliating, alarming and arousing. He leads the poor, burdened pilgrim by the quaking mountain of Sinai, under the canopy of its gloom and thunderings, and over the miry depths of the Slough of Despond. Men feel themselves strangely conscious of a misery and guilt and weakness, which before they had never suspected as belonging to them. They go from side to side, in pursuit of a vain relief, and meet only disappointment and rebuffs. But as the light shines from the Strait Gate and the Atoning Cross, they begin to hope, and believe, and love, and repent. They fall at the feet of the Redeemer, whom they have so long forgotten or spurned. They find under the strong, steady light of Scripture, as expounded and made intense by the Spirit, that Saviour in His glorious fullness. In finding Him, they find themselves; and their own souls thus saved—souls, that, if found at death out of Christ, would have had their redemption ceasing forever — are in Him, become re-

splendent centres, each in its own orbit, of a glory never to be clouded, and fountains of a peace unspeakable and eternal. Out of the dust and the darkness comes the gem imperishable.

And what shall be the result of all the toil and the turmoil to the laborious searcher for souls, and the successful? Fatigue, repining and sad exhaustion? No—the neighbors are made sharers of the joy, although not called to partake the search. The grace won in the closet, streams free over the mart and the highway. True piety is the love of the God of Love; and rejoices in the transmission of its own image and feelings to others. The number of fellow-heirs diminishes not, in religion, the share of each kinsman in the common heritage. The more, the richer. Each angel is the happier on this very day, for this day's conversions of sinners on the earth to God; though it be but some ignorant child, groping its way to the feet of Jesus, some poor outcast, feeling on his soiled brow and

shrivelled heart, the first beams of Christ as the Morning Star; some sufferer, turning, amid sorrow and death, the eye of a new-born hope and a new-found peace towards a Blessed Redeemer and an opened Paradise. If, in the presence of Christ's Pharisaic opponents, who watched for occasion of complaint, there was a pang of envy and disappointment at his reception of the poor, penitent publicans, that feeling of discontent did not pervade the bosom of the unseen, angelic attendants of our Lord. "He was seen of angels," as they watched His earthly pathway; and angels, as they now survey the course of His Church, rejoice in each sinner repenting, though his be dying breath, drawn like that of the penitent thief, on the cross where he hangs in mortal anguish.

What then is the lesson of all this? Are men to do nothing? Are they to wait passively the Spirit's approach? No, my Christian brother. The Spirit is freely given to your asking. No, my unbelieving friend, it

is your fault, to be continually resisting and grieving that Spirit. It has solicited you in every time of sober thoughtfulness. You have gazed on the starry heavens, and felt the paltriness of earth's trifles. You have looked over the ocean, and in view of its depths or its storms, felt the feebleness of man and the majesty of man's Maker. You have stood by the bed-side of a dying Christian, and have heard the appeal bidding you to seek God. In the sanctuary, your lethargy has been disturbed; God has sent truth to hunt and harass you. In all these scenes and seasons, the still, small voice of the Spirit has been calling you to seek God; and love has been calling you to know Christ, and thus be at peace.

Nor let the church forget the terrible dangers of a false peace and a carnal security. It is not the crying "Peace, Peace," that brings it to State or to Church, when there is not the putting away of sin, and the doing of justice, when there is no "peace," of equity — of truth — and of

brotherhood. God threatens those who "settle," like Moab, in mere apathy and worldliness, "on their lees," and mistake sloth and luxury for the repose of innocence and blessedness. He warns His people of the slow accretions of scandals, and errors and judgments, when the strong man armed keepeth his house in peace—when excluded light, and gathered dust, have festooned the habitation for the abode of Lukewarmness and Indolence, of Apathy and Spiritual Death. How terrible is the warning of God, by His prophet, Malachi, to a degenerate Israel. They allowed, so to speak, the litter of their heartlessness and formalism to gather around their religious assemblies, and over their devout services. Then the priest and the people became, as reprobate silver, fit for the fate of the refuse into which they had fallen. The besom of judgment was about to gather, and to hurl forth, such from the courts and privileges which they had profaned. "If you will not hear," saith the Lord, "I will curse

your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it."* The Roman legions, and the fire-brands of Titus, flung in at temple windows, to set ablaze the temple hangings, were God's rude scavengers to sweep, from the land and courts of God, formalism and worldliness; as a band of sweepers goes in after some great gathering, to remove the mire which the multitude had brought in, by their trampling feet, and the accumulated fragments and offal of their turbulent convocation.

When the Jews were about to keep the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, they searched the whole house with candles to cleanse it from the last vestige of ordinary bread which had leaven in it. Paul uses this as an illustration of the Christian Church, as needing to purge themselves anxiously

* Malachi, ii. 2, 3.

for revival, and thus they might be ready to receive a blessing from God. But if the gospel searches and scatters and disturbs, it comes also to sift and to recover. It elevates multitudes, who were before ignorant and careless and depraved, and makes them to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It takes the soul, a coin stamped for its Maker, in His own image, with His superscription. That coin has been trodden on and encrusted, until it is black and unsightly. It lies in the ashes—it is swept into the dust-bin. But He, who has “no pleasure in the death” and banishment of the sinner, brings it forth. He says over His people: “Though ye have lain among the pots,* yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.” The grovelling shall soar and the lethargic become aspiring and exultant. The dimness shall be burnished. Human nature shall be made sterling by the alchemy of Divine Grace. Man shall

*Psalm, lxxviii. 13.

be rendered the mate of angels. The earthly Church shall become the ante-chamber of the heavenly. What lay, with Lazarus, among dogs, shall, with Lazarus, disenthralled and disembodied, rise to the society of seraphim, and the presence and smile of the Lord our God, in the fullness of His glory and the clear beamings of His love, seen at His own home, where is fullness of joy, and where are pleasures forever more. God smites, but it is to heal you ; He disturbs you, but it is to give ultimate calm and peace. He searches you out, buried and dark in your low estate : it is to lift you to His own diadem, to shine as His jewels with a cloudless, endless splendor.

And the Church of God needs in her own home and house to be busy, grieving not the Spirit, but earnest in keeping the light burning clearly, and vigilant that she may prevent the dust from settling, in passive quiet, on her inner furniture. To remain by the past is, in a world of loss and change, not the sufficient safeguard of religious life

and religious usefulness. The dust of formalism, and lethargy, and worldliness, may soon bury up all her treasures of grace and truth, as far as these consist in Christian example. The discipline, that for the time agitates, may be the first and inevitable condition precedent, for the life and growth that is promised to her prayers and her efforts.

The Church has, in her own bounds, scope for large work. All that is needed is but to set about it, in God's sight and strength, in the love of souls, and in the entreaty for, and the expectation of, aid from His good Spirit.

It is work, in which the very stars of heaven, and the angels that always behold the face of our Father in heaven, will work with, and will work energetically and heartily for, her. Arise and shine, then, Church of God! Shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments, and become the praise of the earth and the joy of thy Lord.

Times of change and commotion, and

great social upheaval, and darkenings that cloud the whole horizon, need bring no sad and chill forebodings. Seek Christ, and seek the increase of Christ's Church; seek diligently the souls of the perishing. Hang out the lamp, and scan the omens of duty and hope; ply patiently and cheerily thy task in thy own special field—in thy nook of sorrow and toil. Above all, pray without ceasing; and thou shalt not look in vain, or find thy toil bootless or thy prayer unheeded. The promise for the enquirer, is made to diligent effort and patient, persistent research. The miner does not expect to wash gold dust into his coffers, with the first stroke of his pick, and the first waving of his sieve. He must turn the flood, stand deep in its current for weary days, and lift pick, and urge spade, till the arm aches and the heart wearies; but, so and thus only, comes success. It is so, God has said, in heavenly things, "If thou shalt search for wisdom as for hid treasures, thou shalt find her."

Let not the burdened soul, distracted with cares, to whom the outlook on life is dark and tempestuous, who feels God's Providence tearing into the old rest and scattering roughly and suddenly, the old confidences, therefore give way to despair. It is even thus that God is righting His own house and making the walls of His cause and His Zion to be built in troublous times.

And what is the joy of the regenerate soul, in prospect of these changes, even whilst yet prisoned in the body and surrounded with the conflicts and trials and besetments of earth, if but the grace of God shines in the soul. How can it, then, adopt the words of Charles Wesley, the hymn-writer of our Methodist brethren—

“ Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke—the dungeon flamed with light:
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”

The soul lost is found again. The creature,

wandering and diving and plunging hellward, is saved; and now journeying in the care and under the conduct of God, it is climbing, and, one day, to be soaring heavenward. And if householders are glad over their augmented stores and their increasing home comforts, as the fields grow broader, and the harvests richer, and the revenues ampler, and the ten pieces become thousands and tens of thousands—what greater joy is his, who is rich toward God, whom God has made useful in winning immortal souls to the knowledge and service of Christ Jesus. The mother, the Sabbath-school teacher, the father, the pastor, the missionary, thus honored, are, indeed, blest in having turned any or many, or brought but the individual, or won the multitude from the error of their ways. God grant that each of us may be thus rich, as said Paul, though ourselves poor, “yet making many rich.” What the joy of a father and a Christian mother, greeting a whole household given to their prayers, and safely housed at last

in the upper skies. The waving sieve, the tossing besom, the shadowing cross, all will, in that world of light, be remembered with a fervid gratitude.

“I will search Jerusalem with candles,” says our God by Zephaniah.* Blessed those ready for the Divine scrutiny. “I will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,” is His declaration elsewhere.† Thrice blessed those whom He, the Great Refiner, shall stamp as His truly, and own as His eternally. May each of us, my hearers, thus blessed in the search, and even under and by the refining, be found shining, at the last, as the sun forever in the kingdom of the Father, to Whom—with the Son, the Redeemer—and the Spirit, the Renewer, the Sealer, Sanctifier and Comforter, be glory evermore. Amen.

* Zephaniah, i. 12.

† Malachi, iii. 3.

THE LOST SON.

AND HE SAID, A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS:

AND THE YOUNGER OF THEM SAID TO HIS FATHER, FATHER, GIVE ME THE PORTION OF GOODS THAT FALLETH TO ME. AND HE DIVIDED UNTO THEM HIS LIVING.

AND NOT MANY DAYS AFTER, THE YOUNGER SON GATHERED ALL TOGETHER, AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY INTO A FAR COUNTRY, AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.

AND WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL, THERE AROSE A MIGHTY FAMINE IN THAT LAND; AND HE BEGAN TO BE IN WANT.

AND HE WENT AND JOINED HIMSELF TO A CITIZEN OF THAT COUNTRY; AND HE SENT HIM INTO HIS FIELDS TO FEED SWINE.

AND HE WOULD FAIN HAVE FILLED HIS BELLY WITH THE HUSKS THAT THE SWINE DID EAT: AND NO MAN GAVE UNTO HIM.

AND WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, HE SAID, HOW MANY HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER HAVE BREAD ENOUGH, AND TO SPARE, AND I PERISH WITH HUNGER!

I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER, AND WILL SAY UNTO HIM FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN, AND BEFORE THEE,

AND AM NO MORE WORTHY TO BE CALLED THY SON: MAKE ME AS ONE OF THY HIRED SERVANTS.

AND HE AROSE, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER. BUT WHEN HE WAS YET A GREAT WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM, AND HAD COMPASSION, AND RAN, AND FELL ON HIS NECK, AND KISSED HIM.

AND THE SON SAID UNTO HIM, FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN, AND IN THY SIGHT, AND AM NO MORE WORTHY TO BE CALLED THY SON.

BUT THE FATHER SAID TO HIS SERVANTS, BRING FORTH THE BEST ROBE, AND PUT IT ON HIM; AND PUT A RING ON HIS HAND, AND SHOES ON HIS FEET:

AND BRING HITHER THE FATTED CALF, AND KILL IT; AND LET US EAT, AND BE MERRY:

FOR THIS MY SON WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN; HE WAS LOST, AND IS FOUND. AND THEY BEGAN TO BE MERRY.

NOW HIS ELDER SON WAS IN THE FIELD: AND AS HE CAME AND DREW NIGH TO THE HOUSE, HE HEARD MUSIC AND DANCING.

AND HE CALLED ONE OF THE SERVANTS, AND ASKED WHAT THESE THINGS MEANT.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, THY BROTHER IS COME; AND THY FATHER HATH KILLED THE FATTED CALF, BECAUSE HE HATH RECEIVED HIM SAFE AND SOUND.

AND HE WAS ANGRY, AND WOULD NOT GO IN: THEREFORE CAME HIS FATHER OUT, AND ENTREATED HIM.

AND HE ANSWERING, SAID TO HIS FATHER, LO, THESE MANY YEARS DO I SERVE THEE, NEITHER TRANSGRESSED I AT ANY TIME THY COMMANDMENT; AND YET THOU NEVER GAVEST ME A KID, THAT I MIGHT MAKE MERRY WITH MY FRIENDS:

BUT AS SOON AS THIS THY SON WAS COME, WHICH HATH DEVOUR'ED THY LIVING WITH HARLOTS, THOU HAST KILLED FOR HIM THE FATTED CALF.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, SON, THOU ART EVER WITH ME, AND ALL THAT I HAVE IS THINE.

IT WAS MEET THAT WE SHOULD MAKE MERRY, AND BE GLAD: FOR THIS THY BROTHER WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN; AND WAS LOST, AND IS FOUND.

—*Luke, chap. xv. 11-32.*

IS it not disparaging to compare man to a prodigal, insensate and impoverished and imbruted? The debasement was of man's own making. God is but stooping to uplift us from that degradation; and to entrench and environ us upon the heights of His recovered favor, and amid the securities of His avowed Fatherhood.

All may have noticed the startling appearance of reality,—the distinctness of outline, the body with its shadows standing forth until it seems it could almost be touch-

ed,—which distinguishes the stereoscopic view of some landmark or monument from the ordinary picture. It arises from the instrument's furnishing two different views taken at two different points; but made in the after survey both to blend into one. It is, by seeming to see it from two sides and under two aspects, that we feel the apparent wholeness and roundness and reality, of the scene or the structure to be represented.

Is it not part of the crowning glory of Revelation that it gives us a more impressive and vivid representation of truths and duties and sins, by its giving us the two-fold aspect of many a scene and character which the ordinary literature of the race can see and can limn only on one side? The Bible stereoscopes great facts of human experience. Where the history, the philosophy, or the poetry, of merely earthly origin can afford us but only the one side of an incident or character, and draws thus but a dead and flat sketch, God's inspired messengers present us the two as-

pects—the side that man surveys, and the side that angels and God behold. Thus depicted, the portraiture catches an inimitable reality and prominence. When the woman that had been a sinner stole her trembling way, uninvited and unheralded, into the house of Simon to wipe the feet of his Divine Guest, it seemed on the human side, as the host and his friends regarded it, the unwarranted intrusion of a disreputable stranger giving very questionable honors that compromised and tarnished the Receiver. As the angels of God beheld it, there was a penitent renouncing sin, and absolved of the God whose pardon can remit the offence as His grace can renew the offender.

When the dwarfish Zaccheus climbed the tree, to gaze over the heads of a wondering and tumultuous throng at the illustrious Prophet of Nazareth, it seemed to neighbors, and it may be to apostles, only the curiosity of one whose interest in Christ was likely to do himself little good, and to

do the Master little service, belonging, as the eager gazer did, to a class generally, and not without reason, disliked of the Jewish people,—the tax-gatherers, not very scrupulous as to means of levying, and not very exact and honest as to amounts reported at the treasury, of a tax laid by heathen conquerors upon the proud and chafed and bigoted Hebrew people. But to the Master's own eyes, it was salvation coming home, that day and in that wild gathering, to the house and the heart of Zaccheus; it was another trophy snatched for Heaven; another channel hewn for the gospel's free currents over the world. What a new view of life might we have if we would but, beside the world's view and hasty superficial sketch of it, take out of Scripture the juster and far different view and judgment of it as it appears unto Him who seeth not as man seeth—if we would let the Bible stereoscope, so to speak, all our estimates of character and duty, of trial and temptation, by casting them before us under the twofold light, as

man sees and as angels see them. How would trifles shrink from the world's exaggeration of their size, and grow pale and dim, spite of the world's elaborate painting of them with tinsel and borrowed hues, if we would but let in upon them the light of another world, and the strong glare of the judgment day. So did Moses turn from the splendors of a flattering, and from the terrors of a menacing, court, and find all deadened down in tone and dwarfed into insignificance as to size, under the calm and awful light of a higher sovereignty and an eternal recompense. He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible; and feared not the wrath of the king. So martyrs, threatened with death, but solicited by the proffer of a resurrection from the peril of a yawning tomb, if they would only consent to sin, if they would simply offer incense—a pinch of it—to an idol, rise superior to intimidation and blind to allurements, by looking to a better resurrection—aye—a far better than the world could promise—even the escape

of the soul to God and the recovery of the tortured and mangled body, in the day of the opened grave and the opened doomsday book, then to be a deathless and painless and glorious body, a glorified tabernacle, ever the home of a sanctified and immortal and untempted spirit.

So our Saviour, in those parables of which we now would scan the third and last, meets the cavils of His enemies against His kindness towards publicans and sinners, by bringing in,—upon the partial and limited view which His accusers had of the Saviour and His penitent listeners—the light in which angels and the God of angels looked upon these same lost ones, whom these Pharisees so denounced, and upon the penitence and recovery, which these Pharisees deemed so questionable as to sincerity, and which they judged, if sincere, so certainly and so utterly insignificant as to influence. When the lights of earth on the one side, and the lights of heaven on the other side, fall thus on one and the same incident or character, what a

new reality does it put on. We are veritably and really—each one of us—not what we judge ourselves, or as we seem to our erring fellow man—fallible and precipitate—partial in his over-friendliness, it may be, or prejudiced in his animosity. But we are intrinsically and really as we seem to the eyes of another order of beings—to holy angels and the God of angels. We are what Christ the judge sees us as being—nothing more, nothing less. An English statesman spoke of merely titular nobility as “the accident of an accident.” Beings of a higher world regard man as the creature and the charge of God, the denizen of eternity. To them, the true sorrow for sin, and the consequent welcome of the Redeemer, displayed in the case of earth’s vilest rebel, and lowliest and least intelligent transgressor, are causes of joy. The morning stars, who shouted over our earth’s creation as over a new exhibition of their Maker’s glory, do, this very Sabbath, wonder, and blaze, and warble out new ecstasies

of adoration, as they see the greater achievements of the Redeemer and the Renewer, in the conversion of but one sinner from the error of his ways. Why not you, that converted one: the receiver, yourself of a free pardon; the theme, yourself, of a celestial anthem? To us, the victor's palm, and the capitalist's revenues, and the poet's laurel, and the crown of empire, show like realities. To them, the realities are God's smile, or God's ban—heaven or hell—souls in their apostacy—souls in their recovery—souls in their communion with God—or souls self-banished from God to an irremediable sin and an unreturning exile. Let us implore from God's Spirit aid aright to ponder, on God's pages, the lessons of this new light, bringing into solemn prominence and salient distinctness, the facts of our destiny and our interest—our danger for both worlds, and our duty for all time and for all eternity.

I. As to the order and connection, then, of the three parables, does it not seem as if

they were intended—the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son—to present the great scheme and fact of human salvation as it lies in the Divine Mind? Consistently with Divine Equity and with the faithfulness of the holy law which man has broken, God cannot be the Father of a lost race until His Divine Law, which man has trampled under foot, be magnified and made honorable. He must be “JUST”—just to Himself—just to His angels—just to the unfallen tenantry of other worlds before He can be “THE JUSTIFIER” of him, the penitent and returning prodigal, who believes in Jesus. The Redemption precedes the Renovation.

The Shepherd seeking his estrayed sheep, must be reminding us of the Divine Speaker of the parable, when elsewhere He denominates Himself, the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. Does not this first parable bring forward that atoning sacrifice of the Son, provided in Heaven, and demanded by the Law and the Nature

of God, as the prerequisite for man's recovery and forgiveness?

Then, on this redemption go forth, in the second parable, the Providence of God, and the Spirit of God, and the Revelation of God, as the lamp and besom and the diligent search of the housewife, recovering the lost coin ; and bringing and enabling the soul of man, to see the danger of its condition by sin, and its need of the gracious provisions of the Great Atonement. But, whilst man is dependent on God's Spirit for each good thought, he is not saved in inert carelessness, and in utter apathy and inaction. He is turned of God ; but he turns himself, when thus turned of the Good Spirit. If quickened, he is converted ; and repents and considers his ways, and sets his face toward a forsaken home and an outraged Father. Then comes to the soul thus seeking and self-destroyed, the thought : Will God receive, and can the Holy accept so worthless a petitioner ? And to the soul of man, thus awakened and humbled,

distressed in its self-accusations, and perplexed as to its possible disenthralment, how does this closing parable of the three address its consolations. You are unworthy, but you are the sought and the welcomed of a most loving and generous and placable Father. You cannot so yearn to return, as He longs to welcome your return.

II. Let us dwell next on the affecting picture of man's apostacy, and of man's return, and of God's acceptance, and of man's mistakings and mislikings as to that acceptance.

It is a tender and opulent parent. His sons, housed and trained under his eye, have not requited aright the father's love and bounty. The younger cries, Give me "my portion that falleth to me." Was it his right that he asks it thus? Till the father died, was there any "falling to him?" Had the parent needed the rough hint, that he had lived too long, and now lagged a supernumerary and incumbrance

on life's stage? The father, even to a plea so rude and unfilial, yet responds. It is—alas—the daily, hourly appeal of man to his Maker. We want our share, as we think it, of earth and happiness, away from God; and in some imaginary but impossible independence of Him. You have your own scheme of happiness; and, though God's creature, stalking over His earth, and inhaling with each new respiration, His air—the eye seeing by His light, and the ear hearing by the vibration of His atmosphere, upon your bodily organs of His wise framing;—each returning Spring, with its starting buds and shooting grasses, with its fields again green, and its skies again blue, but a new loan from his unstinted, untiring, unconstrained generosity;—a loan, not a debt from Him—all that you have, all that you are, and all that you hope, but His handiwork and His loan, you seem to suppose it must be “GIVEN” you, as if to enjoy it for yourself, apart from the Author of it all. Why is this? By what right

make you such a claim on God? By what shadow of reason, can you defend the feasibility of a happiness apart from Him? But be this as it will. It is given. God allows you the use of your liberty though it be misimproved, to your own injury and His dishonor. The portion is gathered, to be carried afar from and to be enjoyed out of the sight of its parental Earner and Bestower. Follow the young adventurer to his far land. He is now shaken loose of the old restraints; and hurls off the old fetters of a father's lessons and Sabbath training, and wipes away all a mother's prayerful tears and nursery traditions. The old family Bible shall not pester him. Sabbaths shall not hamper his free, proud movements. Now, for the swing of the free passions; for gaiety and license and self-will. But, along with the new riot of an imaginary and willful freedom, the happiness does not come. Strangers aid the prodigal, by interested flatteries, to wing his treasures, and seize his long-coveted goal of self-indulgence and

earthliness. The reveller, in his cups; the skeptic, in his cavillings; gets loose of God's curbs of conscience and scripture and early training. But somehow, the portion of time and means and strength allotted the reveller, is fast spent. The life fleets by—the powers now flag and fail, and the shadows fall and the amusements grow vapid. The wine has run to lees; the varnish and paint scale off the gaudy scenes of the world's glittering drama. Like the dying Chesterfield, he complains that he has been behind the scenes, and has seen the dirty pulleys and daubed canvas of the world's paltry spectacles. He is disenchanted. But, in the failure of his old illusions, the prodigal is far from God; but not nearer thereby to any true friend, or true home, in the land of his exile. Suddenly he finds that he is poor and in want. But his want is obstinate and his poverty is proud. He will not gratify the old instructors of his childhood by owning a mistake. Not He. He will not ask a Father's pity or forgive-

ness. He will rather keep his complaints from a father's knowledge, and seek the service of strangers ; as he has coveted happiness in the society and boon companionship of aliens. But, instead of sympathy, he finds the shrugged shoulder, and the distant bow, and the unrecognizing stare. When he appeals for help, he is sent to menial work and a starving stipend. He must go into the fields to feed swine ; he yearns for their food ; and, seeing his hungry glances, and wan cheeks, his step that has lost its elasticity, and his cowed air, none of his old mates, who had drained the veins of his prosperity, like the hungry leech, choose to waste a thought, or turn aside from their new revels and new dupes, to bestow a tear on the poor unthrifty outcast, whom they had aided to beggar, and whom they now combine to disavow. The old story—is it not—of the world's large welcome of the prosperous, and quick desertion of the wretched ? Plaudits for the man of the full purse, if its strings are held

but loosely tied ; and sharp criticisms and speedy disavowal of the man whose purse had been rapidly emptied or cunningly stolen. You go to the world for happiness. Long as you can seem to give it to the world, they will live on you. But you become discontented and sad ; and then the world ships you off to her Botany Bay of the foiled and the baffled and the disappointed. In his sorrow, the prodigal comes to himself. His superiority to his father's grave lessons, and his impatience of the restraints of the home, and his preference for the far land and the wild revel ; all were, as he now sees, not merely follies but sins, the sheerest blunders and the saddest insults and wrongs. How many hired servants of his father—men who had less religious knowledge than himself, are now, in true peace, far superior to him. Men who were idolators and cannibals, in the time of his being a Sabbath-school child, are now, thanks to God's grace, true Christian worshippers ; and he is a sad, forlorn, hopeless,

wanderer. The estrangement from God, and escape from the Sanctuary and Sabbath of his youthful training, had not left him as happy, even as much so as less favored men in endowment, in privilege, in station, the mere servants of his ancestral household. They have enough. He is in pinching want. And, coming to himself, he will no longer stay by himself. He who had trusted in self and the world—who had said to the Father: "Give me mine," and had said to the strangers: "Help me spend what is mine," now will turn his back on his fatal choice and his recent associates. How his father may treat his confessions is doubtful. But they are due to justice and to truth; and he will make the attempt. He comes in shame, and in rags. But he is descried afar. Does his father send one of his lowest retainers, to warn off the bounds of the estate the prodigal, who had so disgraced his house and kin? Is he bidden to forbear poisoning with his leprous rags, the air of the mansion of which he was so unworthy?

No, he is descried, to be pitied. The father does not excuse himself for inaction; but runs to meet and welcome him. His confessions are broken off by his father's frank forgiveness. That father runs to meet his child when yet "a great way off;" and falling on his neck, embraces him. The child would have fallen at the parent's feet. The father forbids it, and clasps his son's neck. He bids bring out the best robe, and slay and dress the stalled calf; he puts the shoes on those bared feet lately so bemired, and the ring on the brown hands of the poor forlorn penitent; and the feast begins, without waiting the return of the brother, as yet busied in some distant portion of the estate. That brother is startled on his homeward way at the sights and sounds of some strange rejoicing. He will not rush in, well assured though he might be, that his wise and good father could have no such festival days without some good cause—without some new felicity, that he, like his father, should at once

exult over. He beckons a servant to be his informant. Instead of sharing and helping the father's generous welcome, and adding a brother's greeting and a brother's tears to the glad return of the exile and the attestations of paternal tenderness, he is discontented and will not enter. The father comes out. Insulting his parent, this unnatural and envious man, speaks of the joy as unjust to himself. The return he talks of, not as a return home, but as a "coming," as if it were unwarranted, and should, of right, have been barred and disallowed—a mere visit, meant to sponge afresh on a liberality already abused and a tenderness that had been vilely dishonored. He speaks of the new comer as "thy son," not recognizing that he was as really "my brother." He recalls not the prodigal's sorrows and his amendment and his humiliation, but his sins only; and he paints, in envy and in self-esteem, his own comparative merits. He had no paltry kid, though he would have used it with respectable friends—men

all in good repute, orderly and cosy and moral tax-payers. This outcast had the fatted calf, though his past waste had been with "harlots." But the father responds by the touching remark. Was the elder brother's stay with himself, a mere separation from all "friends?" Was he, the father, then no "friend" of the elder son? Had he not, in the father's presence, and in the father's society, all things as "his own?" Did the feast and the welcome really confer—if he were but right-minded—more pleasure on his parent, than they ought to have done on himself—a son and a brother? Had not the younger child, of the same hearth-stone and roof-tree, been dead; was he not alive again? Had he not been lost; was he not found? Was it natural, manly, filial, fraternal, thus to scowl on Redemption from Hell: and make his growlings of selfish envy the under-base of the melodious anthems of glad angels over a new rescue from Abaddon and a new trophy for Heaven?

III. And now, let us see the application of this most simple and yet profound of parables. How did it show the Pharisees, tenderly, yet keenly, the unworthiness of their discontent at the conversion of sinners. What right had they, as true sons and as true brothers, to remain thus strange to the joys of the loving and the Holy Jehovah, and have thus no response, no ear, no tolerance for the anthems and gratulations of all His holy and heavenly worshippers, over the conversion and recovery of the estrayed and the self-destroyed, now brought happily and forever back? When the Pharisees heard of the ninety and nine sheep that had not wandered, the ninety and nine just men needing no repentance, how readily they appropriated the character as their own. When they listened to the parable of the lost coin, how they congratulated themselves, as bright medals that had never rolled from the meshes of the Law's purse, and never stooped to the sinner's low plane of contamination, tumbled and mired up-

on the soil. But when the prodigal was painted in his excess, how did their self-righteousness take new honors to itself, in the thought of their own lofty escape from all such prodigal vanities and vagabond excesses and disreputable intemperance! But when came, at last, the elder brother's irreverence to the father, and unnatural harshness to his misguided junior, all this jars unpleasantly on them. It was a mirror, that showed them, so faithfully and yet so delicately, their own stolid selfishness, and their sullen alienation from God's delight over the recovery of the lost, and from God's joy in the redemption of the self-destroyed.

You look at the Ragged School, with its noise and unseemly sights and unfragrant steams. You hear of the misery and vice, it may be, of parents and homes from which these children have come. You read of cannibals, devouring their missionary guests. It is hard, is it not, but is it not also blessed, to bring in the other aspect, and the stereo-

scopic view, of angels exultant over light shed into earth's dark nooks, and over souls snatched out of the miry clay of earth's fetid pools, to shine ultimately in the Redeemer's diadem?

Let each say to himself: Thou, my soul, art the prodigal. Like him, hast thou wandered far; and, like him, hast thou wasted much; and, like him, hast thou sunk low. Even thus, hast not thou wandered from the innocence of childhood, and from the high aspirations of thy ingenuous youth, to earthliness and selfishness—from God's law, to thy own mad will? Hast thou not wasted much? not merely of property, for frivolous and unworthy objects and for idlest self-indulgence, but of that, which is more valuable than riches, influence and talent and opportunity—the warnings of conscience and the teachings of the sanctuary and the lessons of the Spirit? Hast thou not sunk low? Exalted above the beast and bird in intelligence, in the possession of conscience and in the anticipations of eternity, hast thou

not too often been the inferior of these less highly endowed creatures, less true to thy God than these are to their own narrower instincts? The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel, reared on miracles, and pampered with divine revelations—Israel knoweth not its Feeder, its Master, its untiring, ungrudging Benefactor. Is not this a degradation, stolidity, and brutality—more than animal, lower than mere brutishness? But, ingratitude to an Incarnate Redeemer, what can be so monstrous as this?

But gazing through the parables, and across the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, into the heart of God thus laid bare, what cause of adoring gratitude and wonder have we in the pledged readiness of God to meet and to pardon the self-accusing, self-destroyed sinner! The new and overwhelming view of our folly and demerit; the juster sense than was ever before attained of our own provocations, of the brightness of the Divine Holiness, of the excellent

righteousness of the Divine Law, and of the glory of the salvation long spurned, seems now to make our offences hopeless of forgiveness. But look up, through the mist and storm of self-reproach to the Father, as these parables paint Him, and see, in the errand of the Ransoming Son, and of the Convincing, Converting Spirit, the incredible and surpassing goodness of the Father. Ready is the Fatherhood of God, waiting even now, and waiting for thee, the sinner, in thy past follies, in all thy sad requital of His tenderness and bounty. Cast not away the salutary humiliations and warnings. Put not from thee the parental invitations, and the fraternal entreaties of thy Saviour and God. Low as may have been thy grovelling, and great and lavish as has been thy wasting, and far as has been thy wandering, all Heaven adjures thee to turn, and waits, intently, thy acceptance of the gracious overture. Turn and live. Retrace the steps of estrangement, and renounce the ways of folly and sin. If man, thy brother,

distrust thee, do not thou distrust the Common Father. Let the scowl of the Pharisee be, for thee, drowned in the beaming, transforming smile of thy Father in Heaven. Christ, thine Elder Brother—not like him of the parable, an accuser against thee, but an Advocate for thee—welcomes thee with an eager generosity, and pursues thy distrustful estrangement with bounty the most lavish, and invitations most cordial and endearing, and adjurations most solemn and importunate. Wisdom wrote for thee the scriptures, and indited for thee the parable, and urges on thy heart the promises.

How needful, amid the trials of this earthly life, and how blessed is it to look off from the low plane and past the near horizon of Earth and Time, to the higher, wider Heavens, with their juster standards, and clearer lights, and unsetting glories, that thus we may learn to judge aright of the events around us, and of the influences that are passing over us. Earthly trial, however sharp and however long, is not

hopeless, or endless, or even aimless, if accepted as the appointment of a parental Providence, and as training and meetening us for rest in Jesus. And earthly splendors and lures grow tame and despicable, when, from the side-lights of scripture, we learn to acknowledge what baits they often are and what fates they often work out. Who would envy the pomp and girding flatterers of Herod, as the worm is seen already commissioned to smite the deified orator? Who would yearn to change lots with the daughter of Herodias, in her grace and her princely home, when the prophet's head is seen as the price of her fascinations, and the ghastly trophy of youth, beauty and rank? Who would adopt, and iterate as their own, the wail of Jacob or of the afflicted Job over all things as against them, whilst seeing, in scripture, "the end of the Lord" in the trials thus deplored and despaired over?

Blessed, indeed, is his lot, however obscure and unfriendly as to man it may seem,

over whom, regenerate, loving and grateful, is heard the Father's assurance: All things are yours. All things shall work together for thy good. Nothing shall be able to separate thee from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. The earth, with all its adornments, treasures and privileges, may well be dear, as thy Father's work, and as one of the outlying fields to His heavenly home. But in addition to a share of His bounties here, there awaits thee a better portion hereafter and in the world beyond this. If even now, in those fields of light and peace, there is joy over one penitent yet trembling and tempted and imperfect on the earth, what, as we may well believe, shall not be the mounting stages of a higher exultation over a human spirit fully enfranchised and finally glorified? What must be the greetings of the Church beyond the judgment-day—the gratulations of the Zion of God all complete in number and rich in the mature and symmetrical grace that has culminated in eternal glory. Beside the

River of Life, before the throne, beneath the splendors of the celestial and endless Sabbath in that city of God, whose residents go out no more for ever. To such a rest the prodigals of earth are bidden to aspire—the believer is destined assuredly to ascend. The sinners of this dark world, forlorn, self-impo- verished, self-banished, are called to look up from their remote exile, from the heaps of unsatisfying husks littered around them, to this upper scene of victory and gladness and cloudless light—the true “Father’s house of many mansions.” “A threefold cord,” said the wise man, “is not easily broken.” And when our days here are sad and few, how blessed the touch, in faith, of the cords of deliverance and pardon, of hope and rescue, flung down into the dun- geon from the throne of the Triune Je- hovah. The Redeeming Son of God—the Renewing, Illumining and Recovering Spirit—and the Adopting and Forgiving and Justifying Father have braided its strands, that shall never part under any

stress ; and which pledge a hope that maketh not ashamed. Believe in God, and live forevermore. Know thy Maker ; seek the eye, and sink in filial trust on the heart of thy Father on high. Once restored to His favor, and at peace with Him, and then shalt thou that be at peace with thyself ; and His wide universe shall, finally, be at peace with thee, all things, loyally or perforce, working together for the good of them that love God and who are the called according to His calling.

NOTE.

IN these Discourses, the three Parables of our Lord are regarded as presenting the work of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father, in setting up "the kingdom of God." It is the establishment of that kingdom in the convert's heart; singly, and apart from his fellow-men.

The Apostolic Benediction, used so generally for all centuries since Christ's ascension, refers to that kingdom on another side, and not so much in a solitary worshipper, but as seen in the collective body of converts. It is a prayer to each person of the Divine Trinity for the maintenance and expansion of that sway of Christ over the nations, by means of Christ's churches. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."* Here, too, as in the parables, the work of the Atoner stands first; but the parental love of the Divine Father now follows in the second place, and to the third place is assigned the energy of the Divine Spirit, as maintaining the unity and brotherhood of the Church, cementing and assimilating the body of Christ; and rendering it aggressive and victorious in its influence over the world, by a power of transmutation and assimilation shed forth upon them. The reign, or "kingdom of God" is, in the lonely disciple, a recovery to God, the enlistment of a

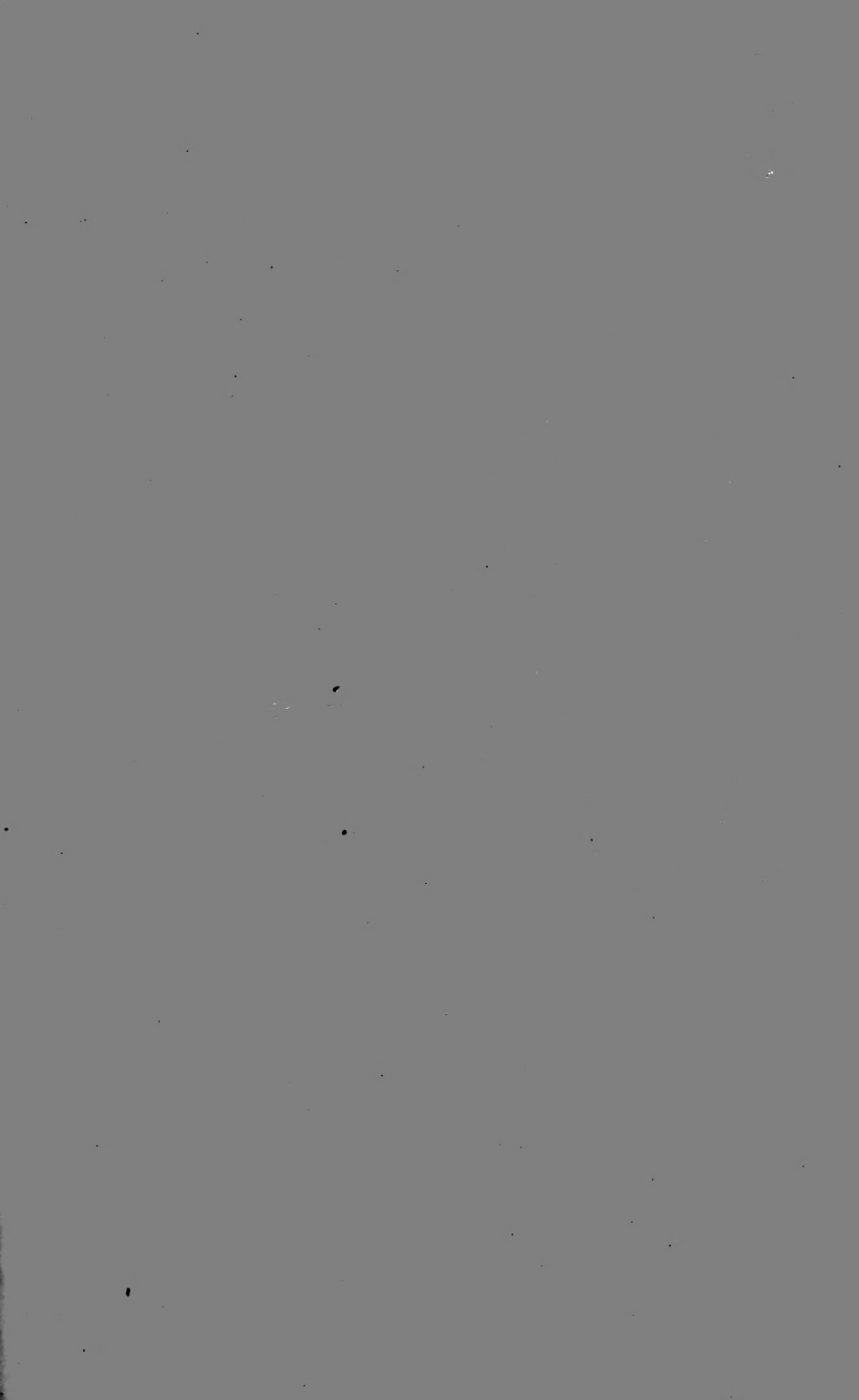
* 2 Corinthians xiii. 14.

solitary recruit. In the assembly of Christ's disciples, that "kingdom" becomes a camp of such recruits, disciplined and summoned to aid in recovering all others within their reach. The spirit of restored fellowship or "communion" *with God* is, in its own bounds, a pledge of higher, closer fraternity with all fellow-citizens, enhancing *their* accord and "communion." And it is as much also a spirit of loving compassion for those *yet estrayed and prodigal*, and as yet beyond its bounds, endeavoring to bring over the sharers of a common revolt into the fellowship of a common hope in Christ and into full heirship in a paradise which the Elder Brother has opened for converts out of all lands and all kindreds. The Spirit of God, taking by Christ's appointment the place of Witness on the removal of Christ's human and visible body from the earth, stands last, when the Apostle is describing the hopes and duties of the earthly church collectively. The great Agency, magnified in the scenes of Pentecost, is to be invoked and to be relied upon by the people of God for the expected glories of the Millennium. That the Second Adam may rally and restore the race which the First Adam betrayed and divided, the Paraclete must be sought, as the principle of life and the bond of union and the giver of conquest.

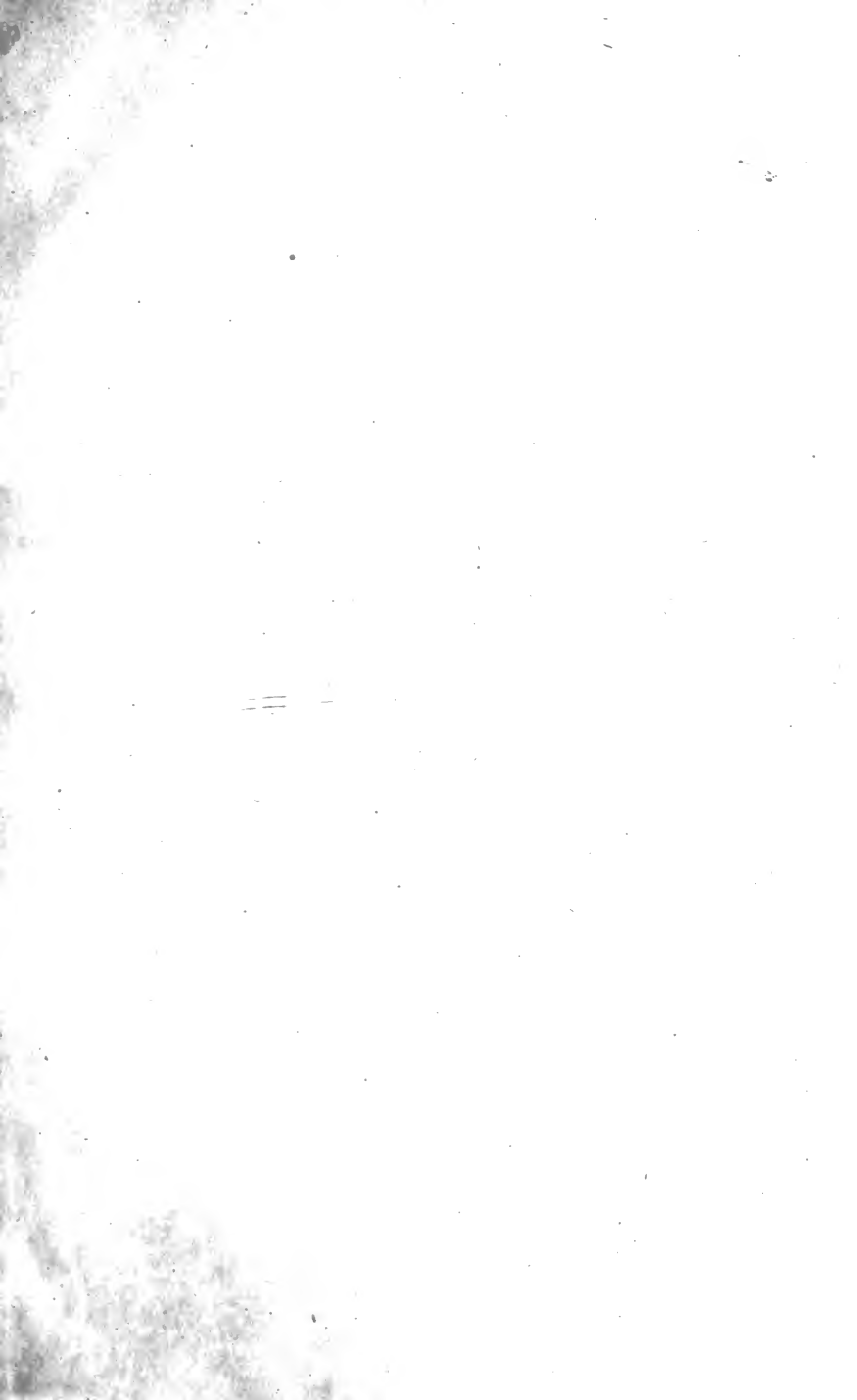
But, in the baptismal form pronounced over each individual convert, and enunciated afresh in each new admission to the earthly church, the names of the Divine Trinity appear in another order. In the mysterious economy of the Divine Nature, the Son, as the sent of the Father, and the Spirit, as sent forth of the Father and the Son, take the second and third place, and the Father's is the first.

If these views be just, the form of the titles of the Godhead used in baptism presents God as He is, absolutely and apart from the work of man's salvation. It is the King's titles, as He proclaims them and His subjects avouch them. The parables, in this chapter of the evangelist Luke, present that same Divine Nature, as manifested for the restoration of man, the banished and lost, in the experience of the individual soul. Without the shedding of blood, no remission of sins—and the Shepherd laying down life for the sheep; without the new birth or regeneration, no capacity for the favor of God—and the Almighty Spirit brooding over the moral chaos for a new creation; and the Fatherly love of God, first devising that atonement and providing that regeneration, and then applying such device and such provision to accomplish the adoption and restoration of the self-banished prodigal. An Effectual Calling based on a prerequisite Propitiation and a precedent or coincident Renewal. And the Apostolical Benediction, sounded in so many tongues of the earth and through so many centuries, over such myriads on myriads of assembled Christians, reminds the whole sacramental host in whose name it is that they set up their banners; and bids them ever, in their plans and supplications, to remember that, as they are bought in One Blood, and are the called of One Father, they need to receive, and cherish, and implore One Spirit. By Him shall ultimately all earth's discords be hushed. To "grieve" that Spirit of Holiness and Love, is to rend Christ's mystic body. To "quench" that Spirit of Light, Truth and Life, is to instal Falsehood in the chair of Verity, to bequeath despair to the world, and to work suicide as against the Church.

The Trinity is not, then, in the Bible a mere speculative mystery, too recondite to be practical. As a doctrine, each disciple avouches it on the church threshold. As an experience, it underlies the conversion of the individual. As a life, it pervades the collective churches through all lands and all ages. It is at once, badge, history and banner. A badge, in baptism; a history, as to the ransom, regeneration, and filial adoption of each separate disciple; and a banner, as to the array and prospects of Christ's collected disciples, moving forward as churches to subdue the world to the obedience of the faith. The Zion of God welcomes each neophyte into her fellowship under this Triune Name, and speeds forth each dispersing assembly that quits her courts, with the same significant invocation. She greets the coming, she bids farewell to the parting guest, in the name of the Trinity.







Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BT 751

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 558 765 7

