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Gospel according to Mark : a study in the
records of the life of Jesus ...

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

BIBLICAL MANUALS

EDITED BY J. ESTLIN CARPENTER, M.A.

THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO MARK

*A STUDY
IN THE EARLIEST RECORDS OF THE
LIFE OF JESUS*

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PREFACE

THE author desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to Professor Holtzmann's *Die Synoptiker*, a recent work which has done much to lighten the labour of consulting older commentaries. References to other works will be found in the text; but no attempt has been made in a book intended for beginners to review all that has been said, or to trace every idea expressed to its original source.

The careful supervision of the Editor has largely contributed to give the book any permanent value it may possess.

The plan here adopted has been to divide the Gospel into sections, and to give first a commentary, and then some additional notes, on the verses included in each section. But the reader is expected to read the words of the Gospel in the Revised Version; and no attempt is made to render what is

here written interesting, or even intelligible, unless its study is accompanied by an equally attentive study of the text of the Gospel itself.

Appendix B is inserted to give a general view of Biblical chronology in accordance with modern criticism. It is not specially referred to again, but the reader will find the value of fixing it, as a picture, in the memory, and bearing it in mind whenever any question of dates is considered.

H. SHAEN SOLLY.

Bridport, March, 1893.

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INTRODUCTION

THE present volume is designed to follow *The First Three Gospels*, by the Editor of the Series. That book is, therefore, the real introduction to this Study in the Gospel according to Mark, and numerous references will be found here to the points there discussed. Some readers, however, may prefer taking the books in the reverse order; and they may find it useful to have here a brief summary of the main facts that are known, and the principal conclusions at which modern scholars have arrived, in reference to the date and authorship of *Mark*.

1. We can go back from the present day to the year 200 A.D., and still find the Four Gospels under their present names occupying the position of Inspired Scripture. It is a position given only to these four, to the exclusion of other Gospels which are not admitted into the Canon or treated as authoritative. Perhaps this period may be extended back as far as 150 A.D.

2. From 150 to 100 A.D. we are in a period in which our Gospels are not known by their present names or regarded as Inspired Scripture; neverthe-

less, numerous quotations are made either from them *or from similar works*, and we have proof of the fact that something known as the 'Memoirs of the Apostles' was much read on Sundays in the Churches. But 'the written Gospel of the first period was the Old Testament interpreted by a vivid recollection of the 'Saviour's ministry' (Westcott), and no written account of the life of Jesus attains a position of equal authority before the middle of the second century.

3. The prevalent belief in the speedy return of Jesus to this world, in his coming back to reward his followers and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth, and the consequent conviction that what he was going to do here was infinitely more important than what he had done, long delayed the full and careful writing of his earthly history. On the other hand, the whole contention of the early Church, that Jesus was the Christ, required some authentic account of his actual career. The Church sought to prove that he had fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold the coming and functions of the Christ, and this could be argued only by comparing these prophecies with some accepted narrative of the main facts of the life of Jesus.

4. At first, these main facts would be supplied by the oral teaching of the Apostles and other eye-witnesses of the events, a mode of teaching far more suited to their capacities and habits than the composition of any written record. This same oral teaching would be continued by their hearers; and, so long as original eye-witnesses remained alive, little need would be felt of any other reference for the authenticity of the

message. As, however, the original eye-witnesses one after another began to drop into their graves, while at the same time Christianity spread among disciples of more literary culture, the need would be felt of a written record, and Memoirs of the Apostles, *i.e.*, recollections of what the Apostles had taught, would be written and read in the Churches.

5. Thus from two sides we reach these earliest writings about the life of Jesus. But while we may feel certain that such 'Memoirs' were written not later than the latter part of the first century, this still leaves it doubtful how much earlier they were written, and, moreover, it is not likely that these memoirs were identical with all or any of our Four Gospels in their present form.

6. A careful study of internal evidence has proved most instructive, especially a comparison of the contents of the first three Gospels. At one time it was supposed that such an analysis favoured the view that *Mark* was a compilation founded on *Matthew* and *Luke*; and as good reason could be shown for assigning a somewhat late date to *Matthew* and *Luke*, this reasoning necessarily assigned a still later date to *Mark*. No discovery in recent years has done so much to restore confidence in our possessing some authentic testimony to the life of Jesus as the proof of the priority of *Mark*. This proof is chiefly due to Dr. Abbott, who in his article on *The Gospels* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* has shown the impossibility of maintaining that *Mark* is a compilation from *Matthew* and *Luke*, and that we have every reason to regard it as the earliest of the three.

7. These conclusions enable us to approach and estimate the one valuable piece of external testimony furnished by tradition. The historian Eusebius has preserved the following fragment from the writings of Papias (died between 161 and 163 A.D.). He is giving an account of information derived from the Elder, John, 'This also the Elder used to say. Mark, having 'become Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately all that 'he [Mark] remembered' (another translation would be 'all that he [Peter] mentioned'), 'though he did 'not record in order that which was either said or 'done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor 'followed him, but subsequently attached himself to 'Peter, who used to frame his teaching to meet the 'wants [of his hearers], but not as making a connected 'narrative of the Lord's discourses. So Mark com- 'mitted no error, as he wrote down some particulars 'just as he recalled them to mind' (or, 'as he [Peter] 'narrated them'). 'For he took heed to one thing, to 'omit none of the facts that he heard, and to make no 'false statement in his account of them.'

(a) We learn from this statement that Mark did not relate the events in the life of Jesus *in order*. But our present Gospel according to St. Mark is distinguished by a carefully recorded order of events which presents fewer difficulties and seems distinctly more trustworthy than the variations in any of the other Gospels. At the same time, *Mark* preserves traces, which will be pointed out in the text, of several collections of sayings and narratives, which have been brought together by a common subject, *i.e.*, by a connection of thought, rather than by a connection in

time. Our natural conclusion is that the reminiscences originally recorded by Mark were subsequently arranged by some editor, but before it was too late to secure the guidance of a trustworthy tradition.

(b) The important statement that what Mark wrote was his recollections of the preaching of Peter is inherently probable. Peter would speak only Aramaic; Mark went about with Peter translating this into Greek for the benefit of the far larger number of disciples or listeners who understood only Greek. After Peter's death (so says another tradition), Mark wrote down in Greek what had been thus impressed upon his own memory by frequent repetition. We know enough of ancient custom to feel sure that this repetition, time after time, would be verbatim, and thus an oral tradition would be formed which would connect our written Gospel, firmly and closely, with the testimony of one of the principal eye-witnesses and hearers of the scenes and words recorded. Tried by internal evidence this account of the origin of the Gospel comes out well, and points will be noted later which forcibly suggest the vivid personal recollections of the Apostle Peter.

8. There are several statements about John Mark in the New Testament, and these connect him with both Peter and Paul. His mother Mary lives at Jerusalem (*Acts* xii. 12) and he goes thence to Antioch with Saul and Barnabas (xii. 25). After going with them as far as Pamphylia, he returns to Jerusalem (xiii. 13). Paul subsequently refuses to take him again as a fellow-missionary (xv. 37-39), and Barnabas goes with Mark to Cyprus. Any estrangement there might have been

seems to have been subsequently healed, at any rate when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, as we may judge from the expressions in *Col.* iv. 10, 11, where he is called the cousin of Barnabas, and *Philem.* 24. Finally, in *1 Peter* v. 13 we have the phrase 'Mark, my son.' All this accords well with the conclusions already reached, and also with another feature which will be frequently noted in our Gospel. This is the Pauline character of many of its expressions and much of its thought. The student must bear in mind that the Epistles of St. Paul are the earliest writings in the New Testament, and our most trustworthy source of information respecting the real Apostolic times. The links connecting *Mark* with Paul do not suggest the derivation of the Gospel from the Epistles, for one remarkable feature in all Paul's writings is the paucity of information they give concerning the life of Jesus; they do strengthen the conviction that the essential elements in our Gospel come to us with the stamp of the Apostolic, not the post-apostolic, age.

9. All precise indications of date are wanting. The question comes up in connection with the contents of chapter xiii., and their reference to the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem A.D. 70. Verse 19 anticipates the siege; verse 20 regards it in retrospect. Some of the materials for the composition of the Gospel may probably have existed in writing previous to this date; the final redaction was certainly later; and it would be much later before every word acquired in the church the character of sacred Scripture,—writing which no editor or copyist would dare to modify. But it is the earliest Life of Jesus we possess, and the

result of its study is to find in it a strong chain of evidence reaching right back to the day when Jesus of Nazareth called Peter and Andrew to leave their nets, saying to them, 'Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.'

PART I.
GALILEE.

DIVISION I. INTRODUCTORY.

§ 1. i. 1-8. **John the Baptist.**

[*Matt.* iii. 1-12, *Luke* iii. 1-17.]

THE Gospel according to Mark begins with a short account of John the Baptist, and gives his preaching as the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The author believes that John's preaching was the preparation prophesied and expected to take place before the coming of the Messiah, and he quotes the Scriptures to show that the events which took place were the fulfilment of the prophecy. The introduction of John is characteristically abrupt and brief. He is the John they have all heard about, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. These words would be very full of meaning to the disciples who first read them. We must try to realise some of the main thoughts and feelings they would suggest. Let us remember that the Jews of this period believed that they were very near a great crisis in history which would divide the age in which they were living from an age to come of a very

different character. This coming age was called the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, but these titles must not lead us to suppose that it was expected anywhere else than on this earth, or that it could be entered only through death. It simply meant an entirely different state of things prevailing in the familiar land of Palestine, in the holy city Jerusalem, throughout the rest of the world. Generally speaking, it meant the triumph of all that was regarded as good over all that was felt to be evil, but the particular form of the belief varied with almost each individual mind. There were, however, two main types of expectation. There were those who thought most of the triumph of moral and spiritual good over the corresponding forms of evil, and who accordingly thought of the coming age as a Kingdom of God in which God alone should be King, and all human dynasties should cease to be. And there were those whose thoughts dwelt more on the means by which this religious change was to be accomplished, and on the work to be done by a human being called the Messiah or Christ, *i.e.*, the Anointed, meaning a king anointed by God as His servant for carrying out this great task of establishing the divine Kingdom upon earth. These are rather two sides of the same belief than two beliefs. The Messiah could do nothing without the help of God, and the fulfilment of his task would be to render up the kingdom unto God that God might be all in all (*1 Cor.* xv. 24, 28). But in religion it practically makes a great difference whether our thoughts dwell on the end or the means; and, in the present case, we may distinguish the popular

Jewish expectation of a leader who would begin by a successful revolt against the Roman Empire and then go on to effect other great political and ultimately religious changes, from the expectation held by those who knew that the religious change must come first, and was the element which depended on human choice and action ; and that, when this was effected, God in His own time and His own way would carry out the necessary political changes. Little as we are told here about John the Baptist, we learn enough to understand that his expectations belonged to this second class. He would ask himself why the coming of this Kingdom of God had been so long delayed. Isaiah had spoken of it 700 years before : why was it not come? John would answer that the delay was owing to human sin and divine patience, for the coming of the new kingdom would be preceded by a day of judgment, when all the wicked would be destroyed, and God had continually delayed this judgment out of compassion because there were so few who were ready for it. Now, however, he felt it was at hand, and all who would make ready must confess and repent of their sins, and then God would forgive them, and their baptism should be the sign of this remission of their sins, and readiness for the great impending change. (Comp. *Life in Pal.* p. 165-176).

1. **Gospel**, or 'good tidings' (cp. *Is.* xl. 9), a Pauline expression ; so is the phrase 'Son of God,' which is not found in some of the oldest MSS., and may have been added by a copyist. Comp. *Rom.* i. 4.¹ **Jesus**, the Greek form of the

¹ On the origin and meaning of the title see *First Three Gospels*, p. 117 sq. ; Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, p. 333.

old Hebrew name Joshua, *Num.* xiii. 16, meaning God's 'help' or 'deliverance,' was a man's name tolerably common among the Jews. **Christ** was a title, the unique significance of which has already been indicated. It is the translation into Greek of the Hebrew word Messiah, both words meaning anointed, *Life in Pal.* p. 152.

2-3. This quotation is really made up of two passages, *Mal.* iii. 1 and *Is.* xl. 3. Mark may have made a mistake in thinking that the first verse came from *Isaiah*, or some annotator may have prefixed this quotation to the one that follows. Note its use in a discourse ascribed to Jesus, *Matt.* xi. 10, *Luke* vii. 27. On the causes which modified the original words see *First Three Gospels*, p. 88. Observe that some later copyist perceived the mistake of referring both passages to the same source, and altered 'Isaiah the prophet' into 'in the prophets' (see margin, R.V.).

3. The introduction here of this quotation is a good instance of the way in which early Christian writers quote their Scriptures, *i.e.*, the Old Testament, to show how prophecy was fulfilled in connection with Jesus Christ. Originally the passage referred to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. See *The Prophecies of the Captivity*, *Is.* xl.-lxvi., by the Rev. R. T. Herford, B.A., London, Sunday School Association, Essex Hall.

4. The grammatical construction of verses 1-4 is not clear; it is a title passing into narrative, but the meaning is plain. **John**, the English form of the old Hebrew name Johanan, or Yohanan, meaning 'Yahweh (the Lord) is gracious.' Mark says nothing of John's birth or descent; but Luke relates a story, afterwards current in some Jewish Christian circles, according to which he was the son of the priest Zacharias and Elizabeth, kinswoman of Mary the mother of Jesus, born to them wondrously in their old age, *Luke* i. 5-25. **Baptized**, literally 'dipped': on the meaning of the usage, see below. **Wilderness**, the uncultivated land immediately around the Jordan in the lower part of its course towards the Dead Sea. **Baptism of repentance**; note the early and true feeling

that God requires only repentance for the remission, or forgiveness, of sin. The rite of baptism was based on practices which are prescribed in the Old Testament, as well as found in ancient heathen religions. In *Ex. xxix. 4* 'a washing with water' is a preliminary to the consecration of Aaron and his sons. In *Lev. xiv. 8*, bathing is part of the ceremony for the cleansing of lepers; and we may infer from *2 Kings v. 10*, that bathing in the river Jordan was regarded as specially efficacious. In the Prophets we find the easy and natural transition from physical to moral disease. In *Is. i. 15-17*, we have matter of fact passing into figure of speech: 'And when ye spread forth your hand, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.' *Comp. Jer. iv. 14.* 'Oh Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.' See also *Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26*, and *Ps. li. 7*. After the Exile the growing tendency to ceremonialism caused a great increase in the amount of washing done entirely as religious ritual; *Mark vii. 1-5*. The baptism of John was a revival and development of the more spiritual ideas found in the Prophets.

5. **All the country of Judea.** John began to preach in the south country, and the movement spread to the capital without delay. His appearance and language quickly excited interest, and people of all classes went out to see him. In due course the news reached Galilee also, and roused the same eager expectation, cp. *Matt. xi. 7* *Luke vii. 24*).

6. **Camel's hair.** John resembled one of the old prophets in leading a rough, hard life in the open country, or wilderness, of Judæa. He wore a garment made out of the long shaggy hair of the camel, and eat the food afforded by the desert. **Locusts**, insects resembling large grasshoppers. They abound in the East, and sometimes become a terrible plague; see *Joel i. 4-6*; *ii. 1-11, 20-25*, where the devouring army consists of locusts in different stages of growth; comp. *Nahum iii. 15-16*; also *Judg. vi. 5, vii. 12*; *Jer. xlvi. 23*.

Jews were allowed to eat locusts, *Lev. xi. 22*, and to this day they are largely eaten by the Bedouin Arabs. **Wild honey.** The honey so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament was taken from the wild bees which are still plentiful in the land, and if this is meant here, the word 'wild' shows that the Jews had now begun to 'keep' bees. Wild honey, however, may mean a sweet gum which exudes from various plants in the desert.

7. Cometh after me. John's preaching was to prepare man for the coming of the Kingdom of God, but he was careful to prevent the people supposing that he claimed to be the Messiah. One of the inferior slaves of a great man would have to attend to his shoes, and John thus indicates the relation which existed between himself and One who should come after him. **Mightier than I,** may refer to God Himself, or may mean a human Messiah; Mark would understand it in the latter sense, and wish his readers to refer it to Jesus.

8. Baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The 'Spirit,' was the old Hebrew word for the power or energy which was believed to come forth from Yahveh and enable man to do mighty deeds, such as legend ascribed to Samson, *Judg. xiv. 6, xv. 14*, etc. The 'Spirit of holiness,' or 'holy Spirit,' was in the same way God's gift to His people, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27, Is. lix. 21*, to be their guide and help, *Is. lxiii. 10*. So all seasons of great religious renewal would be marked by an outpouring of such heavenly influence, and the early Church believed that they had received it in an especial manner. This verse, accordingly, seems to introduce one of the principal thoughts of the Apostolic age. In *Acts xix. 1-7* we hear of disciples of John who have 'not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' On the other hand, 'receiving the Holy Spirit' was regarded then as the regular accompaniment of Christian baptism; *Acts viii. 17, x. 44-48*. If John himself really used these words, he would mean by them the same thought as *Joel ii. 28, 29*, but the connection of this with baptism is probably due to the writer of the Gospel.

§ 2. i. 9-11. The Baptism of Jesus.

[*Matt.* iii. 13-17, *Luke* iii. 21-22.]

As in the case of John, the introduction of Jesus is abrupt and brief, telling us just what was known in the earliest days, and making every sympathetic reader anxious to learn more. It is an undoubted fact that Jesus was baptized by John, our best evidence being that this baptism soon became distasteful to the early Church, for John's baptism was one of repentance, and the Church did not like to think of Jesus as having any sins of which to repent, and tried in various ways to explain away the significance of the act. Without discussing theological subtleties about sinlessness, we may note here an indication of the earliest view of Jesus as a man, in all essential points like his human brethren.

There is one very profound and important sense in which John was the fore-runner of Jesus. It was John's 'religious revival,' to use a modern phrase, which called Jesus forth from his abode at Nazareth, where his quiet life had hitherto caused no one to expect great things of him, and which made it impossible for him to go back again to live in the peaceful home.

In Mark's account of the baptism the divine revelation is represented as made to Jesus; it is he who sees the vision and hears the voice; while Luke's later account tells us that 'the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form'; and Matthew, later still, makes the voice address the assembled crowds. Mark and his

readers would probably take the account as a narration of outward fact, but the actual words used seem to invite us to pass behind the narrative and form some idea of the origin of a tradition whose growth we can clearly trace. There is nothing to hinder our taking these words as an account of the spiritual feelings experienced by Jesus at this turning point in his career. He may have told his disciples how on this occasion he felt God's absolute assurance that the step he was now taking was well-pleasing in the sight of his Heavenly Father, how he now realised as never before the assurance that he was a Son of God, beloved by his Father, how he knew that he was told this by the very voice of God, so that he could henceforth build upon this rock of consciousness his religion of the Divine Fatherhood, how he felt that the heavens were opened for the descent of God's Holy Spirit, bringing strength and guidance to his soul. Jesus may well have spoken about this solemn consecration of his new life, for God's prophets teach truths learned in their own spiritual experience. And they all have a difficult question to decide, and may well hesitate, as did Isaiah (vi. 1-8), and Jeremiah (i. 4-10), before taking up the work. There were ties still claiming Jesus at home; was it certain that a higher duty called him away? Was he really given by God a message which he was bound to deliver to the world? He found the answer to these questions in the feelings he experienced at his baptism.

9. In those days. A common Hebrew phrase, meaning 'at that time.' Mark supplies no more specific date. Luke fixes

it (iii. 1) in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, A.D. 28 or 29. Nazareth of Galilee. Note that Mark does not count on his readers knowing that Nazareth was in Galilee. Compare the later account in *Matt.* iii. 13, 14; and see *First Three Gospels*, pp. 17, 42, 153, 163, 270 sq.

10. He saw, an inward impression is described (as in old Hebrew prophetic thought) in the language of the senses. Cp. *Is.* vi. 1. The heavens rent asunder, a phrase of the old religious tradition. The dwelling of the Most High was supposed to be above the sky. When he would communicate directly with one of his chosen servants, the sky must be opened, cp. *Ezek.* i. 1., *Ps.* lxxviii. 23, 24. The Spirit, the divine endowment for the work of kingship or prophecy, as in *Is.* xi. 2-3, xlii. 1. As a dove, cp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 164. A voice, the Jews (like many other nations of antiquity) believed that audible words were sometimes uttered by heavenly powers in warning, guidance, or attestation. The narrative here does not say that the words were heard by others, though that may have been intended by the writer. Thou art my beloved son. On the origin and Messianic meaning of these phrases see *First Three Gospels*, p. 17, 152. Further insight into the ideas which helped to mould the narrative into its present shape will be gained from the study of St. Paul's language, e.g., *Rom.* i. 3, 4; viii. 3, 14-16; *Gal.* iv. 4-7.

§ 3. i. 12, 13. The Temptation in the Wilderness.¹

[*Matt.* iv. 1-11, *Luke* iv. 1-13.]

In these two verses we again have the point of departure for the later traditions in *Matthew* and *Luke*. We need not doubt that there is a real and important

¹ Comp. *First Three Gospels*, pp. 168-176, especially for parallel stories connected with Zoroaster and Gotama.

fact at the basis of these narratives, and it is a fact which finds many parallels elsewhere. After the great change in St. Paul, caused by the revelation of the Son of God in him, he withdrew to Arabia for solitary thought and divine communion (*Gal.* i. 15-18), and we shall find similar withdrawals for lonely communion with God one of the most noticeable features in the life of Jesus. But before the solitary nights of prayer could bring the communion with God which is all peace and strength and joy, Jesus would have to pass through a season of conflict and trouble, what Goethe calls the period of *Sturm und Drang*, of storm and strain. There is a grand description of this period in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book I.

'And thus before his eighteenth year was passed
 Accumulated feelings pressed his heart
 With still increasing weight ; he was o'erpowered
 By Nature ; by the turbulence subdued
 Of his own mind, by mystery and hope,
 And the first virgin passion of a soul
 Communing with the glorious universe.
 Full often wished he that the winds might rage
 When they were silent ; far more fondly now
 Than in his earlier season did he love
 Tempestuous nights—the conflict and the sounds
 That live in darkness.'

There is at least a hint of this love of the wilder scenes of nature in the withdrawal to the 'wilderness,' and in the statement, given by Mark alone, that 'he was with the wild beasts.' We need not hesitate to read in the temptation by Satan¹ and

¹ *Comp. Life in Palestine*, p. 57, sq.

the ministry of the angels a further account of the conflict which was fought out in the mind of Jesus. All holy thoughts and good impulses were then ascribed to the intervention of God's angels, and all evil desires to the suggestion of Satan and his demons. This language was used almost down to our own time, and the facts which were thus explained were the same then as now. Jesus refers to these facts in *Mark* iii. 27. There is a 'strong man' who must be bound in every human heart before that heart can be entered and possessed by the Spirit of God. The natural man does resist most forcibly the higher claims of conscience, and resents the opportunities offered for doing any great work for God, and not till that inner conflict has been fought and won does the man or woman become an efficient servant of God. The same truth is illustrated in the parable of the Talents (*Matt.* xxv. 14-30), a parable which is too often supposed to refer only to preparation for the future life. But if we read the lives of any of God's servants who have been made 'rulers over many things' in this world, and bade to 'enter that joy of our Lord,' which consists in the power to do a noble work for righteousness, we find that this power is given them as a reward for having been faithful over a few things. First they conquer the forces of their own nature, and discipline the activities of their own soul, and then it is given them to win the hearts of many others, and overcome much evil with the good which they have made their own. For girls, especially, this is grandly illustrated in the 'Life of Mary Carpenter.' Young men should study the 'Confessions of St. Augustine,' remem-

bering the enormous influence exerted by that man after he had conquered his own highly-gifted nature.¹

12. Straightway, a word of frequent occurrence in Mark's narrative, see remarks on pp. 15, 16. **Driveth him forth**. The haste with which Jesus seeks the retirement of solitude away from the crowds round the Baptist is ascribed to the irresistible impulse of a higher power. **The wilderness**, probably one of the steep uninhabited ravines, descending from the central mountain mass into the deep depression of the Jordan valley.

13. Forty days, a round number belonging to the old religious tradition, *e.g.*, Moses on Sinai, *Ex.* xxiv. 18; Elijah, *1 Kings* xix. 8. **Tempted of Satan**. Our earliest narrative says nothing of the character of these trials. As we shall see, Mark cares chiefly to give a brief outline of the facts, and leaves to later writers the attempt to fill in details, especially in regard to the teaching of Jesus. **Wild beasts**. The mountain solitudes were haunted by dangerous animals like the lion and the bear, as well as by the harmless gazelle, the coney, or the fox.

¹ For the old Greek legend of the choice of Hercules, see Appendix A.

DIVISION II. (i. 14-ix. 50). THE GALILEAN MINISTRY.

§ 4. i. 14, 15. Jesus begins to preach.¹

[*Matt.* iv. 12, 17, *Luke* iv. 14, 15.]

These two verses continue the brief summary which introduces the ministry of Jesus; their tone is that of a Pauline disciple,² and we probably have here an instance of the parallel passage in *Matthew* (iv. 12, 17) preserving an older form of the tradition than *Mark*.³ But the main fact is clearly stated. When Herod the Tetrarch,⁴ in whose dominions John had been preaching, had put John in prison (*Mark* i. 14), Jesus took up the work which the Baptist had begun, and carried it on in his own way, and in Galilee, his own country. Jesus would feel that he could not let such a work fall through for want of a leader. As John's preaching had called him forth from Nazareth, so now John's imprisonment made it more than ever impossible that he should return to his peaceful home and quiet life. This is how God sends His summons to those whom He calls to be His prophets and our leaders. So the stoning of Stephen made Paul an Apostle, and the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church.

14. Delivered up. For the circumstances of John's arrest and imprisonment see vi. 17-18. **Came into Galilee.** Jesus had not gone home at once after his stay in the wilderness.

¹ Comp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 81.

² See *First Three Gospels*, p. 279.

³ See *First Three Gospels*, p. 343.

⁴ A son of Herod the Great, cp. remarks on vi. 17.

15. **The time is fulfilled.** The Jewish teachers looked for a great manifestation of God's power when 'this age' would end, and the 'age to come would begin.' No one knew when this would take place, but it was fixed in the great plan of Providence. In former days of terror and persecution they had asked how long they must wait, *e.g.*, *Ps.* lxxix. 5. Jesus believed that the hour was near, the time appointed by God had all but run fully out. Cp. *Gal.* iv. 4.

§ 5. i. 16-20. Calling the First Disciples.

[*Matt.* iv. 18-22, cp. *Luke* v. 1-11].

Jesus, returning into Galilee, would pass along the shore of the freshwater lake known as the sea of Galilee (called in *Luke* v. 1 the lake of Gennesaret) on his way to Capernaum. The narrative suggests that this is his first meeting with the men whom he invited to come after him, and that their calling was so sudden that we must ascribe it to superhuman insight and influence. But we must remember that we are still dealing with the abrupt style of the introductory narrative, and there is nothing to exclude our supposing a longer acquaintance and time for the exercise of a more spiritual influence. These men may have listened more than once to the preaching of Jesus, and some outspoken demonstrativeness on their part may have shown him that they were likely to make good 'fishers of men.' Most significant is the fact that, from the very first, Jesus begins to associate others with himself in the work; he does not attempt it single-handed, but at once begins to form a group of men whose united action he should inspire and

direct, that is to say, he begins at once to form the society which afterwards became the Christian Church.

16. **Casting a net.** The lake abounded in fish, and a large number of the inhabitants earned their livelihood as fishermen. Two kinds of nets were used, the 'drag-net,' which a single boat might drag after it, and a large net like a modern *seine*, which would be spread round a considerable area with the help of several boats.

17. **Fishers of men.** A bold, but most appropriate metaphor; one of the most vivid of the sayings of Jesus.

§ 6. i. 21-34. The First Sabbath at Capernaum.¹

[*Matt.* viii. 14-17, *Luke* iv. 31-47].

As soon as Simon becomes a follower of Jesus the narrative becomes fuller and enters more into detail. In verses 19 and 20, for instance, we learn how James and John were 'mending the nets,' and how 'they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants,' particulars not essential to the narrative, out of place in a mere summary introduction, but giving vividness to the actual story, and indicating that at this point Mark begins to use the recollections of what Peter had himself witnessed. The present section devotes thirteen verses to the events of a single day—Peter's first day as a follower of Jesus—events which made an indelible impression on the disciples' memory, and would often be told to those eager to learn about these early days of the preaching. Here,

¹ *First Three Gospels*, p. 81.

by reading carefully, we seem able to catch a certain tone in the narrative indicative of this impression. We have an instance of this in the curiously frequent use of the word 'straightway.' It occurs in verses 10 and 12 (and also in verses 42 and 43) in places where it has an important significance, but between verses 18 and 30 inclusive it occurs no less than seven times, generally in places where its main significance seems to be to carry on to us the impression of an extraordinary rush of important events, distinguishing this period immediately following the call of Simon. Under the influence of this impression Mark neglects to give us a single word of the teaching of Jesus—an omission which Matthew (v., vi., vii.), endeavours later to supply. Mark just tells the facts and their immediate consequences, as they stood out after many years in the memory of an eye-witness, and as the story was usually related in the primitive Church. A more important instance of this impression is in the account given of the **AUTHORITY** with which Jesus taught, and the astonishment with which his hearers listened to such teaching. It strikes for us the keynote of his character and his message, and gives the reason why the Bible contains a New as well as an Old Testament.¹

21. **Capernaum**, an important city on the north-west shore of the Lake. Its ruins have now been identified with the mounds of Tell-hûm. For a full account of the **synagogue** and the **Sabbath** see *Life in Pal.* pp. 104, sq.; 114, sq.

¹ Comp. notes on verses 22, 24, 25, 27. On the real nature of this authority, see also Dr. Martineau's *Seat of Authority in Religion*, pp. 68-72, and throughout the book.

The synagogues were the 'meeting-houses' of the people, used both for worship and for the administration of justice. The congregation elected 'elders,' with a chief ruler as their head. There was no minister in our sense of the term, but an official was appointed to take charge of the sacred books and act as schoolmaster for the children. The ruler of the synagogue would allow any qualified person to take part in the services, and the fact that Jesus began teaching in the synagogues shows that he did not put himself in opposition to the religious institutions of his country, but tried to utilize them. The Sabbath was the day for the principal worship in the synagogue; see also note on *Mark* ii. 23.

22. **Scribes**, see *Life in Pal.* pp. 125-134. They made the copies of the Law and the other Scriptures kept and read in the synagogues. Just as our lawyers decide questions in accordance with Acts of Parliament and the decisions already pronounced by the judges, so these scribes endeavoured to decide all questions relating both to civil and religious life in accordance with the written Law and the decisions already given by leading Rabbis, as the scribes were generally called. Thus everything with them was a question of interpretation; they believed that every point was divinely settled in their Law, that no living power existed to make new laws, but that to do the whole will of God men had only to study the Law, and the Rabbinical comments on it, and carry out what they believed to be its precepts. Jesus was often addressed as 'Rabbi,' but taught in an entirely new manner. Instead of referring to Moses as the final human authority for everything, he taught as one having authority himself. From the first he took the position of a prophet of God, *i.e.*, a man to whom God speaks direct, and gives a message which the prophet is to deliver to the world. Cp. *Man's Knowledge of God*, by R. A. Armstrong, pp. 130-144. The special interest of the incident described in the next four verses is still in this 'new teaching.'

23. **Unclean spirit**, see *Life in Pal.* p. 59, sq. The Jews had adopted from their Babylonian conquerors a belief

in the existence of myriads of evil spirits, or as the Greeks called them, 'demons.' By the time of Jesus the belief in these demons had grown to extraordinary dimensions. They were regarded as the direct agents of all evil, and diseases were supposed to be caused by one or more demons entering into and taking possession of the human body, and so using it that the demoniac, or person possessed, would speak in the name of the demon. This belief was of course shared by the demoniacs themselves, and caused, as well as accompanied much mental disease, or insanity. A man who believed himself 'possessed' would naturally go 'out of his mind.'

24. To destroy us. A further part of Jewish demonology was the belief that the Messiah, when he came, would win a great victory over Satan and all the powers of evil, and drive away into the desert, and there destroy, all these demons. The man here spoken of is impressed by the prophetic authority with which Jesus teaches in the synagogue, and, with the quick cunning of a disordered intellect, at once jumps to the conclusion that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Holy One of God, come to establish the Messianic kingdom and destroy the demons. See *First Three Gospels*, p. 188, sq.

25. Rebuked him. Jesus replies by words of rebuke addressed to the spirit. No doubt he shares the customary belief about demons, and recoils from receiving any title of honour from such a source. Mark describes what happened in the language of his time, but we can easily translate it into the language of our time, and realise how this poor half-witted or insane man became silent and calm under the influence of the commanding presence, and strong, self-reliant words of Jesus.¹

27. A new Teaching. Cries of wonder, questions, exclamations, rise on all sides. The people are amazed because it is a new thing for demons to obey a word of command. Exorcism, or the casting out demons, was regularly practised among the Jews, but always effected by magical arts and incantations (*Life in Pal.* p. 61); and, when

¹ On the general significance of the Gospel miracles see *First Three Gospels*, chap. vi.

so much depended on the demoniac himself believing that he was possessed by evil spirits or freed from their power, we can quite understand how such cures would often seem successful. The essential thing was that the patient should have full confidence in his doctor. Jesus inspired this confidence, not by weaving spells, but by speaking as one having authority.

28. The report of him. Many a modern traveller tells of the extraordinary rapidity and excitement with which the report of any new cure spreads among Syrian Arabs, or, indeed, among any races of similar temperament and degree of culture. This verse, however, interrupts the story and is a later addition. The beginning of the local excitement is told in verses 32-34.

29. The house of Simon. The brothers lived together, and their house may have been the home of Jesus in Capernaum, cp. ii. 1, iii. 20.

30. Simon's wife's mother. A certain interest has been attached to the fact of Simon being married. The Christian Church did not begin with a celibate, *i.e.*, unmarried clergy. Comp. *1 Cor.* ix. 5.

31. This is a second case of a cure which seemed miraculous to the bystanders, but the excitement caused by the arrival of this wonderful new Teacher may account for the throwing off the fever.

32. At even. The repetition in the phrase 'at even, when the sun did set,' emphasises the fact that at this moment the Sabbath ended, the Jewish day lasting from sunset to sunset. Evidently the people waited for this before bringing their sick to be healed.

33. At the door, of Simon's house; cp. ii. 1-4.

34. He healed many. Mark does not say all, avoiding the exaggeration of the story as told later in *Luke* iv. 40, and *Matt.* viii. 16; cp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 281. These demoniacs hailed Jesus as the Messiah, and he told them to be silent; this, to the disciples, after they, too, were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, seemed to be not allowing 'the demons to speak, because they knew him.' Cp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 276.

§ 7. i. 35-45. The First Missionary Tour in Galilee.

[*Matt.* iv. 23, viii. 1-4, *Luke* iv. 42-44, v. 12-16.]

The narrative continues without a break in the same vivid, detailed style, telling what Simon so well remembered, and helping us to realize a fact of great importance, viz., that the religious work begun by Jesus immediately produced consequences which threatened to destroy it. People cared more about the diseases of their bodies than of their souls; they made so much of his marvellous cures, that they would give little attention to his preaching the kingdom of God. He felt too much compassion for his suffering countrymen to refuse to heal any sickness which it seemed he could cure, but he also felt that this medical work must not be allowed to interrupt the more important religious work. He knew his real calling was to be the Physician for the soul (ii. 17). This was a reason for immediately leaving Capernaum. But the same fate pursued him in other places; and, to this day, multitudes of his followers pay much more attention to the accounts of his miracles than to the evidence of his prophetic word and spiritual influence.

35. **And there prayed.** We cannot expect the Gospels to tell us much about the prayers of Jesus; they form his most private and personal relation to God. All the more noteworthy therefore is it that we are told, especially in *Luke*,¹ of many important occasions when Jesus prayed, often retiring for solitary prayer. This shows the strong impression

¹ iii. 21, v. 16, vi. 12, ix. 18, 28, xi. 1, xxii. 41, 42, xxiii. 34, 46.

made on the disciples' minds that their master, who gave them everything, drew his own strength and inspiration from these quiet hours of communion with God.

36. **Simon** already takes the lead. **They that were with him** include the three others who had been 'called,' and possibly more, the followers are at present an indefinite group.

37. **Seeking thee.** All are seeking Jesus as a wonder-worker; that is just what he is anxious to escape from.

38. **Came I forth,** from my home at Nazareth.

39. **Throughout all Galilee.** A summary of the whole Galilean ministry. We note again that Jesus begins by preaching in the synagogues, as in verse 14.

40. **A leper.** For the disease of leprosy see *Lev.* xiii. A more vivid picture of its misery may be gathered from the Book of Job. It breaks out in sore boils accompanied with intolerable itching, ii. 7, 8; Job cannot even rest at night, vii. 3 and 4; his skin is in a dreadful condition, 5; and if he falls asleep he is scared with dreams and terrified with visions, 13, 14; he would rather choose death than 'these bones,' 15; his body wastes away, xvi. 8, xix. 20; his eyes are red with weeping, [the eye-lashes fall out and] on his eyelids is 'the shadow of death,' xvi. 16; his breath is loathsome, xix. 17; he is abhorrent to his nearest kin, shunned by former friends and treated with contempt by his servants, 13-16; his whole condition is utterly repulsive and wretched, xxx. Cp. Miss Cooke's *Life of Father Damien*.

41. **Be thou made clean.** We are not told how seriously this man was afflicted with the disease; it varied from a surface eruption, which was itself a sign of cure (*Lev.* xiii. 16, 17, 23, 28, 34, 37, 39), to a deep-seated, and so far as we yet know, incurable malady. In the phrase to 'make clean,' we have the same word as is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and is there translated to 'pronounce clean'; so that it is allowable to suppose that Jesus examined the man, found that the eruption was only on the surface and declared the leper cured. From this basis of

fact an exaggerated tradition may have grown. Undoubtedly Mark, verses 42, 45, represents the event as a real cure, an actual departing of the leprosy, too sudden to be natural. The religious worth of the incident lies in the fact that Jesus was moved with compassion, and touched with his hand this leper, who, to all the rest of the world was an object of contempt and abhorrence. The mediæval Church followed his example, and exercised much charity towards lepers.

43. Strictly, better with the margin, 'sternly.' '*After he had been angry at him, wrathfully addressed him. We are to conceive of a vehement 'Begone now! away hence!' (Meyer.)* This seems a strange contrast to the compassion just spoken of, but is all the more emphatic evidence of the anxiety Jesus felt not to be treated as a wonder-worker, even when his pity for suffering compelled him to do all in his power to relieve pain and lighten misery.

44. Offer, *Lev. xiv.*, gives full directions concerning these offerings. Modern critics consider that these regulations belong to the legislation that was not compiled till after the Babylonian Captivity; but, in accordance with Jewish custom, it was all ascribed to Moses, and matters such as these Jesus simply takes as he finds. *Comp. vii. 1-23.* Jesus wished the man to have the proper testimony of the priests to his cure, and to pay them their due fees. He begins by recognising, not opposing, the great religious institutions of his country.

45. A most vivid description of the difficulties which Jesus tried in vain to avoid.

§ 8. ii.-iii. 6. Hostile criticism and opposition.¹

In this section we have a group of five narratives, setting forth the kind of criticism and opposition which Jesus encountered very early in his ministry. It is hardly probable that the incidents followed one an-

¹ *First Three Gospels*, pp. 82, 294, 389 sq.

other immediately in the order here given, but it is very likely that Simon was in the habit of relating them one after another to illustrate to his hearers the origin and growth of this opposition.

(a) *Healing a Paralytic*, ii. 1-12. [*Matt.* ix. 1-8, *Luke* v. 17-26]. The first incident is the healing of a sufferer from paralysis. Jesus has returned to Capernaum, and a great crowd assembles to hear him teach, not in the synagogue, but 'in the house,' see note on ver. 1. Four bearers arrive, carrying a palsied man, but they cannot force their way in through the door. They mount by the outside steps on to the flat roof, and pulling up the tiling which ran round the little inner court, they let down the sufferer on his couch into the midst of the throng. In the story which follows, Jesus, impressed with the faith of the paralytic and his friends, declares that his sins are forgiven. The explanation of the words here ascribed to Jesus is to be found in the ordinary Jewish belief that all illness, as well as other misfortunes, was the direct divine punishment for sin; such is the view expressed so pertinaciously by the three friends of Job. It is easy to understand how depressing this belief would be to the sufferer; his pain and weakness would be regarded as evidence of God's anger against him, and the only accepted sign of God's forgiveness would be a restoration to health and strength. Jesus, preaching the Gospel of the Divine Fatherhood, knew that God requires only repentance as a condition for the forgiveness of sins (*Mark* i. 4, *Luke* xv.); and, judging from the faith of this man that there was no barrier of impenitence between him and God, assures him of

God's forgiveness. The thrill of joy and thankfulness with which this assurance is received is the occasion, and possibly to a large extent also the cause, of a cure; the disease being nervous, and much aggravated by the depression arising from this sense of unforgiven sin, we need have no difficulty in understanding how a great change might be worked in this way. The excitement of the whole effort, the success of the strange attempt to reach the great teacher, the look of love, the tone of confidence with which Jesus speaks, all would combine to give the paralytic strength, not only to get up and walk, but also to take up the light couch or pallet-bed on which he had been borne, and himself carry it away. To the scribes, this whole procedure seemed blasphemous, because it was an exact reversal of the order they deemed orthodox. It was a case of the forgiveness causing the cure, instead of the cure coming first as evidence of divine forgiveness. To them it seemed blasphemy that anyone should give assurance of divine forgiveness before God had given, as they would say, the sign by effecting the cure. Jesus, or, perhaps we should say his disciples, appealed to the fact that the cure followed the assurance of forgiveness as proof that 'the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins,' making it part of the general argument that Jesus was the Christ. But we must not leave this passage without noting that the whole narrative here may have been largely modified in some editing of the Gospel after it was first written. Jesus himself does not appear to have shared the view that every misfortune was a direct and special punishment for a special sin (see

Luke xiii. 1-5), and it is possible that the whole passage between the repetition of the words 'he saith to the sick of the palsy' in vv. 5, 10, is an interpolation.¹ With this omission the incident simply illustrates the faith of the sick that Jesus could heal them, and his willingness and ability to perform many wonderful cures.

1. **In the house.** At this time Jesus and his disciples seem to have had a house which served as their headquarters at Capernaum. It may have been the house belonging to Simon and Andrew.

2. **Spake the word.** Simon's recollections were of incidents rather than of this 'word' which Jesus spake. Our regret that Jesus was not better reported, or that he did not himself write as well as speak, may help us to understand the desire of early disciples, which successive evangelists and editors tried to satisfy by gathering up all the traditions recording 'sayings' of Jesus. *Comp. First Three Gospels*, p. 59.

3. **Palsy.** A shortened form of the word usually written paralysis. The disease is often spoken of as 'a stroke.' It is most severe in its first effect, which is often succeeded by partial recovery.

4. Probably the whole building was on the ground floor. Most householders would have thought more of the damage done to their property than anything else. Jesus is specially impressed with their eagerness as evidence of faith. The Greek word here translated 'bed' is a colloquial or vulgar term which no well-educated Greek would think of using. This illustrates what Paul says about the social position of the earliest disciples, *1 Cor.* i. 26-28.

6. **Scribes.** See note on i. 22.

7. **Blasphemeth.** The essence of blasphemy is to say

¹ See *First Three Gospels*, p. 390.

in the name of God things which a man is not justified in saying. This may be applied to much that has been said in the name of God, even by good men, especially if these were priests.

10. **Son of man.** On this term see *First Three Gospels*, pp. 122, 383. The Evangelist no doubt here supposes it to mean Messiah, but it is very doubtful whether Jesus so used it. For a different view, comp. Dr. Martineau on this whole incident, *Seat of Authority*, p. 345. The question will come up again when we come to viii. 31. **Power**, or 'authority,' as in i. 22, another Messianic term.

12. **Glorified God**, the source and giver of the 'power,' rather than Jesus who wielded it.

(b) ii. 13-17. *The calling of Levi* [*Matt.* ix. 9-13, *Luke* v. 27-32]. The second incident strikes the keynote of the whole Galilean ministry of Jesus. For a full account of the Scribes and the Pharisees see *Life in Pal.* p. 125-144, and cp. note on i. 22. The Pharisees were a religious party who earnestly endeavoured to observe all the regulations laid down by the Scribes; and, to do this thoroughly, they cut themselves off as much as possible from all intercourse with those outside their own set; in particular, they refused to eat with them. The word Pharisee means 'Separatist.' The 'Publicans' (*Life in Pal.* p. 81-84), were the tax-gatherers who collected the tribute for the Roman government. As the strict Jews considered it contrary to their religion to pay this tribute (*Mark* xii. 13, 14), these publicans, who were Jews accepting this hateful service under the Romans for the sake of gain, are throughout the Gospels taken as types of the worst kind of sinners. The Pharisees would not have the smallest voluntary intercourse with them. Jesus

seeks them out as a physician visits his patients, confident that he can do them good, willing to run any risk of receiving harm from them.

13. **The sea.** The inland Sea of Galilee, on the shores of which was the city of Capernaum, i. 16, 21.

14. **Place of toll.** Along the north-west shore of this lake ran an important trade-route from Ptolemais to Damascus. Bethsaida was a frontier town of the territory of Philip, a younger son of Herod the Great; while Capernaum was the corresponding frontier port of Herod the Tetrarch (*Life in Pal.* p. 74, 75). Hence the importance of the 'place of toll' at the latter city, and the number of publicans, verse 15, in the neighbourhood. **Levi.** There is some difficulty about this Levi, who appears here to be called as an apostle in the same way as his four predecessors (i. 16-20), but who is not mentioned in the list of the Apostles, iii. 16-19, and appears no more in the Gospel history. Either, therefore, he was not called as an Apostle, but only invited to dinner, or else, what is more probable, he appears later under another name which replaced the name Levi, as the name Peter replaced, only less exclusively, the name Simon. If we were confined to Mark's Gospel we might identify him with James the son of Alphæus (iii. 18). But *Matt.* ix. 9, speaks of the calling of 'Matthew the publican,' and gives Matthew the publican in his list of the Apostles (x. 3.) It is therefore probable that when Levi became a follower of Jesus he took the name of Matthew. See further note on iii. 13-19.

15. **His house.** That already spoken of as the present headquarters of Jesus and his disciples. Luke's account of the incident is different. Levi makes a feast at his own house for Jesus. The offence to the Pharisees would be as great in the one case as the other.

17. **Call,** refers first to the invitation to the friendly meal, but soon acquired a wider meaning.

(c) *The Question of Fasting*, ii. 18-22 [*Matt.* ix. 14-17,

Luke v. 33-39]. The third story relates to the practice of fasting. In the Old Testament fasting is prescribed on the Day of Atonement (*Lev.* xvi. 29, sq.; xxiii. 27, sq.; *Num.* xxix. 7), an observance still strictly maintained among modern Jews, even those who are careless of all else connected with their faith. We find other passages which refer to fasting as a form of self-denial by which divine favour might be won (*Joel* i. 14; ii. 12, 15; *Zach.* vii. 5; *Dan.* x. 3; *1 Sam.* xxxi. 13; *2 Sam.* xii. 16; *1 Maccabees* iii. 47). After the captivity, fasting became more and more formal (*Life in Pal.* p. 122), being regarded as a meritorious observance which would have great influence on God, and which the Pharisees practised regularly on Mondays and Thursdays, the days when, according to tradition, Moses had ascended Mount Sinai and returned to the camp. Jesus wishes to restore fasting to its original place as a natural spontaneous expression of human feeling, something done, as Dr. Martineau says of worship, 'not *for* a purpose, but *from* an emotion.' There must have been something repulsive to his mind in all asceticism, *i.e.*, in this whole notion of men giving themselves pain or depriving themselves of pleasure in order to please God and receive His help. This was not the truth Jesus taught about the loving Heavenly Father and His relation to His children on earth.

18. **John's disciples.** Though John was in prison, his 'disciples' evidently kept together as a recognised body, and at a later time they went about conferring 'the baptism of John,' and spread even to Ephesus, cp. *Acts* xix. 1-5. The Baptist was something of an ascetic (*Mark* i. 6, *Matt.* xi. 18), so that

his followers naturally adopted many of the stricter observances of the Pharisees.

19. Sons of the bride-chamber. An Eastern way of saying the friends of the bridegroom. Weddings were the occasion of great rejoicings which often lasted many days.

20. The days will come. Our first intimation that Jesus had a presentiment of his coming death. He doubtless noted the growing opposition to his teaching, but the whole story may occupy in Mark an earlier place than it occupied in the real history. This is the more probable because there is an incongruity between verses 19, 20, and the next two, which makes it most unlikely that Jesus would have spoken all four at the same time. In verse 19 Jesus says that his disciples do not fast while they are happy, but, verse 20, that they will do so when grief furnishes a natural occasion; that is to say, he condemns fasting as an artificial way of making oneself miserable while admitting the practice when it seems an appropriate expression of a real feeling. But in verses 21, 22, he goes further and enforces the inappropriateness of all formal fasting to the spirit of his new religion and the experience his disciples will have. *Comp. S.S. Helper, Oct., 1892, p. 226.*

21. A good example of original and incisive illustration. **An old garment:** Fasting was like an old garment worn into holes; Jesus would not try to mend it with his new religion, which would only make the old custom still more formal and less spiritual, just as a piece of strong, new cloth would, on the least strain, tear away the edges of the old garment. **Undressed,** not fullered or milled, a process which makes cloth softer and more pliable.

22. The same thought expressed in a still more impressive illustration (*Comp. First Three Gospels, pp. 96, 356*). **Wine-Skins.** The skins of goats were used to store wine. **New wine,** that had not done fermenting, would exert great pressure on the skin in which it was tied up; it would be something like champagne, or any effervescing drink, which requires a strong bottle and a good cork. So the eager spirit of the new religion taught by Jesus could not be safely

confined within old forms which had sufficed for the far weaker zeal of John's disciples and the Pharisees. Something stronger would be needed to restrain and turn to useful purpose the new enthusiasm of Christianity, and this came with all the real difficulties and persecutions the disciples of Christ had to encounter; they had no need to manufacture artificial hardships.

(d) 23-28. *The Sabbath made for man.*

(e) iii. 1-6. *Healing on the Sabbath.* [*Matt.* xii. 1-14; *Luke* vi. 1-11.] The last two stories illustrate the opposition which arose in connection with keeping the sabbath (*First Three Gospels*, p. 293). For a full account of the sabbath see *Life in Palestine*, pp. 114-119. The seventh day was kept as a day of rest in ancient Babylonia long before the Hebrews entered the land of Canaan, and they had adopted both the custom and the name centuries before they gave the explanations recorded in *Ex.* xx. 11, or *Deut.* v. 15. At the time when Jesus lived, the sabbath was kept with extraordinary strictness. It was not at all a day of gloom, but a day for the best dresses and the best dinners (previously prepared). 'The rich gathered their friends round them at dinner; even the poor must have three meals.' But nothing which could be called work, and nothing which would tempt a man or woman to work, might be done on the sabbath, and the discussions concerning what was and what was not allowed are ludicrous in their trivialities. But matters were serious enough when a band of Jews during the first Maccabean revolt, B.C. 166, suffered themselves to be slaughtered without resistance on the sabbath, or when the defenders of Jerusalem allowed

Pompey, B.C. 61, to erect earthworks against the walls unmolested on the sabbath, and so capture the city. Here we have the most intense expression of the feeling that success depends upon the favour of God, that the favour of God depends upon doing the will of God, and that the will of God is to be found written in a book which men have only to accept and interpret. Jesus does not accept any book as a final authority, and the revived sabbatarianism among large sections of his followers is a striking instance of the Old Testament being still regarded with greater reverence than the New, and of the nominal Christian paying greater heed to the Law of Moses than to the spirit of Christ.

23. Pluck the ears of corn. Apparently it was 'plucking the ears of corn so as to make a way' which was regarded as unlawful. Mark says nothing about the disciples eating the corn, an addition which probably crept into Matthew and Luke from the mention of David's hunger in verse 25.

25. What David did. Mark alone gives the important words, 'when he had need;' it is human need which has higher claims than any religious ritual.

26. Abiathar. See *1 Sam.* xxi. 1-9. When David fled from the court of king Saul, he came to the sanctuary at Nob and there obtained some provisions and a weapon from the priest. But this priest's name was Ahimelech, and Abiathar was his son, xxii. 20. The mistake is a clear case of error, which 'some ancient authorities' tried to correct by reading 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest,' *i.e.*, Abiathar who afterwards became high priest. This is a clumsy correction of an obvious error. Moreover, David came alone, and misled Ahimelech into thinking that there were young men with him for whom he wanted bread. For the regulations concerning the shew-bread see *Lev.* xxiv. 5-9.

27. The Sabbath was made for man. One of the

most characteristic of the great sayings of Jesus. It involves a principle of profound importance, viz., that religious institutions are to be observed, not to glorify God, but to do good and be of service to man. This test of service comes again, ix. 35 and x. 34, in connection with human rank. Here Jesus utters a saying which justifies us in regarding all forms of worship in 'divine service' as questions of spiritual expediency; their real test is 'do they help man?' Their aim is not to influence God but to raise men to higher moral and spiritual lives. Such a saying marks the distinction between Judaism (with all inferior religions) and Christianity. See p. 28. Some of the most liberal teachers among the Jews said, 'The sabbath is given to you, not you to the sabbath.' The religious originality of Jesus appears not in his saying things unlike anything that anybody else had ever said, but in his wholly new conception of religion, with the new relation thus involved between God and man. *First Three Gospels*, p. 97, 284.

28. Son of Man. See *First Three Gospels*, appendix, p. 383 sqq., especially p. 391, where the question involved in the addition of this verse to the preceding is discussed. The argument is complete with verse 27, and rests logically on a grand universal principle. Verse 28 does *not* logically follow; the general principle is not a proof that the Son of Man, meaning the Messiah, is Lord of the sabbath. But the verse crept in as part of the usual endeavour to prove that Jesus was, and claimed to be, the Messiah. Matthew and Luke avoid the illogical sequence involved in verse 28 following verse 27 by simply dropping the general principle, and going straight to the statement they cared about, 'the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath.'

iii. 1-6. This last story finds its place here as a second illustration of disputes concerning the sabbath.

1. No intimation is given of any miracle being required for the healing of the withered hand, and obviously what took place did not impress the bystanders as any proof of

superhuman power. But in pre-scientific days, and among people who, like the Arabs of to-day, have no scientific knowledge and whose thinking never runs on the lines of modern thought, there would be no sharp line between the miraculous and the natural. Tacitus, *Hist.* iv. 82, tells of a somewhat similar cure; but without full medical details all such statements are of no scientific value. The real point in the story is the illustration of the principle that just as the sabbath may be broken for a work of necessity, so it may be broken for a work of love. The Gospel according to the Hebrews says that the sufferer was a mason who begged that his hand might be rendered again fit for work. We find a somewhat analogous instance in the Old Testament, *I Kings*, xiii. 4-6, where Jeroboam's hand is suddenly dried up, *i.e.*, the circulation arrested, and afterwards restored to a healthy condition.

3. **Stand forth.** in the sight of all the congregation. Jesus wishes for the utmost publicity here, and is willing to make this, as we say, a 'test case.'

4. Here, again, Jesus justifies his action by reference to a fundamental moral principle, and endeavours to send it home to the conscience of his hearers so that they themselves may 'judge what is right.' The force of contrast sharpens the thrust. He was wishing to do good, his opponents to do harm; he was wishing to save a life, they to kill. Which was lawful on the sabbath day? Many of their own teachers admitted that all saving of life was lawful on the sabbath, and Jesus wished to show that his action might come within this exception, and to emphasise the contrast between this and the murderous thoughts of those who straightway 'took counsel against him how they might destroy him.' One of the most vital points in Christian morality is to include what goes on in the mind, the thoughts and the feelings, within the sphere of human conduct for which we are morally responsible and shall be judged. *Comp. Matt.* v. 21, 22; 27, 28.

5. **Anger**, one of the touches of vivid human feeling peculiar to Mark, *cp. First Three Gospels*, p. 284. **Hardening**

of their heart. There is a certain hardening of the heart which may be either the result of former unfaithfulness, or else is the deliberate preference of what is known to be evil in place of what is known to be good. In the former case, the Bible treats this hardening of the heart as the most terrible of divine punishments, a punishment which narrows and finally excludes the possibility of repentance and leads straight to destruction and death. The only hope is that trouble and pain may soften this hardness before it is too late. Comp. T. T. Lynch's hymn, 'Oh, break my heart.' In the latter case, the sin is the real sin against the Holy Spirit, of which we shall speak later. The subject may be further illustrated from the story of the Exodus (*Ex.* vii.-xii.) and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, a narrative belonging to the time when Israel's prophets were intent on insisting that there is only one true God, and that all things evil as well as good spring from Him as their source. Comp. note on *iv.* 12. See also *Romans* i. 28, xi. 25, *Eph.* iv. 18.

6. **Herodians**, a political party, attached to the interests of Herod, the Tetrarch, or ruler, of Galilee and Peraea, by no means natural allies of the Pharisees. *Life in Palestine*, pp. 70-75. Comp. *vi.* 14.

§ 9. iii. 7-12. Indications of Growing Fame.

[*Matt.* iv. 24, 25, xii. 15-17, *Luke* vi. 17-19.]

These five stories illustrating the growing opposition are followed by a short section indicating the growing fame of Jesus, especially as a wonderful healer of disease.

7, 8. **The sea**, cp. i. 16; ii. 13. For the localities, comp. *Life in Pal.* pp. 11-30.

9. **A little boat**, such as Simon or the sons of Zebedee

could provide. Mark alone preserves this graphic illustration of the extent of the 'thronging.' *First Three Gospels*, p. 287.

11, 12. **Son of God**, or the Messiah, cp. i. 1. *Mark* shows more clearly than the other Gospels that it was 'the unclean spirits,' or as we should say, men who were more or less out of their mind, who were the first to salute Jesus with messianic titles, and who were repeatedly and sternly forbidden by Jesus to do so. Comp. i. 23-25, 34. *First Three Gospels*, 276.

§ 10. iii. 13-19. The choice of the Twelve Apostles.¹

[*Matt.* xi. 8, *Luke* vi. 12-16.]

The Epistles of St. Paul afford conclusive evidence that shortly after the death of Jesus there was a body of disciples known as 'The Apostles,' or 'The Twelve,' a number corresponding to that of the tribes of Israel. Compare *Gal.* i. 17, 19, *Rom.* xvi. 7, *1 Cor.* iv. 9, xii. 28, 29, xv. 5. The importance which Paul attaches to his claim to be himself an Apostle, directly called by Jesus Christ (*Rom.* i. 1, *1 Cor.* i. 1, ix. 1, xv. 9, *2 Cor.* i. 1, xi. 5, xii. 12), shows that in his time the Apostles were recognised as the highest authority on earth in the newly-founded Christian church, where they had the same power 'to bind and to loose' as was possessed among the Jews by the Sanhedrin.² We naturally look to the Gospels for an

¹ *First Three Gospels*, pp. 287, 376.

² *Life in Pal.* p. 65 sq. The word Apostle conveys the idea of one who is sent as a messenger with full powers to act for his master, an Envoy Plenipotentiary.

account of the founding of this supreme tribunal of the early Church, and we do not fail to find it there. But we need not really be surprised that we do fail to find an account of the origin of anything so definite and formal as the Apostleship became shortly after the death of Jesus. We have not even an accurate list of the names of the original Twelve, and a great part of the instructions given to them by Jesus in *Matt.* x. is by Luke transferred from them, ix. 1-6, to the Seventy disciples, x. 1-20. We have a simpler and more original account in *Mark*. Out of the large crowds who came to hear his word and see his work, Jesus called apart a certain number; we may suppose that he had some private talk with them; and, in the end, he appointed twelve with the three-fold object, (1) that they might be with him more constantly than it was possible for the larger crowd to be; (2) that he might send them forth to preach, and speak the same word as he spoke about the Kingdom of God; and (3) that he might give them authority to cast out demons, *i.e.*, that they might learn to pursue towards those mentally afflicted the kind of treatment which he himself had found so successful.¹ Thus understood, the whole proceeding is a very simple, natural act on the part of Jesus, leading ultimately, under divine providence, to most momentous consequences, but not deliberately planned by Jesus with a view to these consequences, done only with a view to the need of the time when he made this appointment. Here are four lists of the Apostles :

¹ Comp. i. 23-27, 34, 39, iii. 11. Note the use of the word 'authority.'

Mk. iii. 16-19. *Luke* vi. 14-16. *Matt.* x. 2-4. *Acts* i. 13.

Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
James } John } Sons of Zebedee	Andrew } James } John }	Andrew } James } John }	John } James }
Andrew	John	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew	Thomas	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew
James	James	James	James
Son of Alphaeus	Son of Alphaeus	Son of Alphaeus	Son of Alphaeus
Thaddeus	Simon The Zealot	Thaddeus	Simon The Zealot
Simon	Judas	Simon	Judas
The Canaanean	Son of James	The Canaanean	Son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	[Matthias]

There are considerable discrepancies in regard to the order of the names, though all four lists agree in beginning with Simon Peter and ending with Judas Iscariot; also in giving Philip the fifth place, and James son of Alphæus the ninth, which seems to divide the whole list into three sets, each of four names. A more serious discrepancy is reconciled if we suppose that the Thaddeus of *Mark* and *Matthew* is the Judas son of James given by *Luke* and *Acts*. There is, however, no evidence for this identification, and it is quite as likely that there was a real uncertainty which of two men had been called to be an Apostle. It is singular how little we know of these men and of what they did, either before or after the death of their master.

13. **The mountain**, the hills behind Capernaum, west of the lake. Note a certain carelessness of style, indicating a lack of revision, and making it most unlikely that the gospel of Mark was condensed from *Matthew* and *Luke* as was once supposed. We should have expected this verse to run, 'Now these are the names of the twelve, Simon, whom he surnamed Peter.' Here, in *Mark*, Simon receives his surname of Peter, which means 'Rock,' in connection with this selection of the twelve. Matthew defers the appellation till the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, xvi. 17, 18, in order to emphasize the appointment of Peter as the highest authority of the Church, a passage on which all the pretensions of the Papacy are founded. In *Mark* no such investiture with authority is mentioned, either here or in viii. 27-33. In a far deeper and more spiritual sense, Simon, the first man to become a disciple of Jesus, was the foundation-rock upon which all the rest of the Christian Church has been built. Similarly, Mahomet's wife Chadijah was the first to believe him to be the Prophet of God; and, as such, has always held a special position among Mahometans.

17. **Boanerges**. This surname is not mentioned again in the New Testament. The brothers seem to have had an impetuous and ambitious disposition, and it is often supposed from this verse that they were gifted with an impressive style of eloquence. Comp. x. 35-45.

19. **Iscariot**, Judas the man of Karioth, a village in the south of Judah (*Yosh. xv. 25*). Judas was a name distinguished in the noblest annals of Hebrew history, but no mother has ever wished her son to be christened by the name of Judas.

§ 11. iii. 20-35. Jesus accused of Madness.¹

[*Matt.* xii. 22-32, 46-50, *Luke* xi. 14-23, xii. 10, viii. 19-21.]

Mark's narrative here passes on without a break from the last section, while Matthew and Luke insert a large amount of additional information. But Mark has here preserved a most valuable characteristic of the early ministry of Jesus, an incident altogether ignored in the later Gospels, but coming straight from a time when Jesus was regarded simply as a man among men, and judged by ordinary people according to their ordinary standards. All three Gospels give us in almost identical language the passage *Mark* iii. 31-35, *Luke* viii. 19-21, *Matt.* xii. 46-50, where Jesus intimates that the claims of his mother and his brethren upon him must not be allowed to interfere with the still greater claims on him of those who do the will of God. Taken by itself, this passage has seemed to some to contain at least a touch of unkindness and want of filial affection. But such a passage should not be 'taken by itself,' as though it gave us full particulars of the whole proceeding, enabling us to judge the case on all its merits. The Gospel narratives seldom give us more than the briefest outline, just what seemed to the writer most important. It is often said 'circumstances alter cases,' and it is precisely these attendant 'circumstances' which the brief Gospel narratives seldom or never give us in full. This ought to be constantly borne in mind, and especially when we see others criticise, or are led ourselves to criticise

¹ *First Three Gospels*, p. 283.

the conduct and moral character of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, however, a careful search will reveal an important circumstance and enable us better to understand the case. We have such an instance here, where Mark has preserved in iii. 20, 21 the real reason why Jesus had to choose between the claims of his kindred and the claims of his disciples. Jesus did not refuse to go and speak with his mother and his brethren who had come to see him (*Matt.* xii. 46-50); he refused to allow himself to be put under restraint as a madman.

The passage iii. 22-30 does not belong to the original story, but we shall understand why it was inserted here and finds a natural connection, when we remember that to 'be beside oneself' (21), and to 'have a demon' (22-30) were regarded as the same thing. It is quite possible that the accusation of being in league with Satan, which Jesus seems to have regarded as the most cruel charge he had to face, had its origin in this attempt of his friends 'to lay hold on him.' We can recognise a natural growth in the three charges, 'He is beside himself,' 'He hath Beelzebub,' 'He is in league with the prince of the demons.' Jesus refutes his opponents by 'parables,' *i.e.*, arguments which were figurative rather than literal. He had been making a most successful assault on the kingdom of Satan, as recognised by the men who spoke what was regarded as the language of the unclean spirits (i. 24, 34, iii. 11, etc.); and it was sheer perversity on the part of his opponents to regard this as a sign of internal division in Satan's kingdom, a division which would have brought about such a

fall of that kingdom as certainly had not taken place. All that had happened was that someone had entered the house of Satan and was spoiling his goods, which was proof that Satan, strong as he was, had first been bound, and this could only be by the power of God. Then follows the passage about the unpardonable sin, a passage which has produced more religious insanity than any other verses in the Bible, especially when connected with visions of hell-fire and eternal torment. Yet it may well be doubted whether Jesus meant more than to indicate the utter alienation from God of those who thus turn light into darkness, who do not know the spirit of God when its manifestations are right before them, but ascribe the overcoming of evil by good to the operation of evil not of good, and so repel the one influence which enables sinners to repent. No doubt, the worst forms of this 'eternal sin' are rare; but there is a terribly common tendency to ascribe evil motives to those we dislike, which comes very near to what Jesus so solemnly condemns.

20. Into a house. The marginal translation is the best, 'cometh home,' *i.e.*, to his headquarters at Capernaum.

21. Friends, his family at Nazareth; this narrative is continued in verse 31.

22. From Jerusalem. We have heard, verse 8, that people were already coming from as far as Judæa and from Jerusalem to see Jesus, and these scribes from Jerusalem may have been sent down to officially investigate the claims of the new Teacher. For a full account of Jewish Demonology, see *Life in Pal.* p. 59-63. Beelzebub is a name representing that of an ancient Phœnician fly-god. The truer view of the great Hebrew prophets regarded these heathen deities as just nothing (*Is.* xli. 23, 24); but under Persian

influence, the Jews went back to the earlier belief which regarded heathen deities as real beings, only now they looked on them as evil spirits. Note that Mark does not call Beelzebub the Prince of the Demons, which is a mistake made in *Luke* xi. 15, and *Matthew* xii. 24, where two sentences, each containing a distinct accusation, are rolled into one.

23. Satan. The Prince of the Demons, the supreme representative of evil; it is to this further and much more wicked accusation that Jesus replies. Satan, *i.e.*, the Adversary, was originally regarded by the Hebrews as one of the Sons of God, whose duty it was to act as a 'lawyer for the prosecution' against any man whose moral character was being considered (*Job* i. 6-12, ii. 1-7). This involved the belief that Satan was allowed to inflict many trials on men whom God had favoured, and gradually led under Persian influence to regarding Satan as the author of evil almost as God was regarded as the author of good. 'How can evil,' asks Jesus, 'cast out evil?' Evil can only be overcome with good.

24-26. In a kingdom, where true authority is lost in the strife of faction, there can be no stable government; a family divided by quarrels between father and son, or brothers and sisters, has no peace or welfare; if the powers of evil strove to turn each other out, they would collapse. He who expels the demons, therefore, is not in league with their chief.

27. The figure suddenly changes. How is the house of a strong man, the Castle Dangerous of some giant of wickedness, to be entered, unless the occupant is first secured? Not till then can he be forced to give up his ill-gotten gains. This is an important truth for every one who begins to try to 'do good.' No one can overcome evil with good who has not first bound down the evil principle in his own heart. First must come the battle with the lower side of his own nature, and then, having won the victory over temptation from within, the man can go on to spoil the goods, rescue the captives, of the strong enemy he has already beaten. This is the exact reverse of what the Scribes suggested. *Comp. First Three Gospels*, p. 169, also note on i. 13.

29. **Blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.** After the doctrine of the Trinity had been elaborated, nearly four hundred years after Christ, this verse was supposed to refer to a special sin against the Third Person in the Trinity. There would be no such thought in the mind of Mark or his early readers. The words have a distinct moral significance which we may thus express: Sin can be forgiven only after repentance, and a sinner cannot repent so long as he is consciously warring upon (blaspheming against) his best and holiest impulses, the very pleading of God Himself within his own soul. He may regret having incurred punishment and be sorry for *himself*, but that is not penitence. Repentance requires genuine sorrow for having sinned, and when he does come to feel such sorrow, then, so far from blaspheming, he will be thankful for all the discipline which has taught him to hate his sin. The essence of **Forgiveness** is reconciliation, the restoration of love and confidence, not the mere remission of the penalty. God may refuse to allow us to escape punishment precisely because He desires to forgive us, and because letting us feel the consequences of our own actions is *the* way to make us repent and ready to be forgiven. **Eternal.** But the whole object of punishment would be lost if it were destined to last for ever. Its infliction would be sheer purposeless pain, revengeful and malignant. A great modern preacher has said, 'If everlasting punishment is true, God is a lie. Both cannot be true.' The expression here is 'eternal sin,' and taken in connection with the preceding words, this seems to mean a sin so great as to render all future reconciliation with God impossible. But this can be only while this state of mind lasts with its deliberate war against the Holy Spirit. In criticising the verse, however, we must take our stand firmly upon our knowledge of God and our faith in His character as the Heavenly Father revealed by Jesus. Attempts have been made to explain away the meaning of eternal and refer it to quality rather than duration, but these attempts are not approved by the best scholars. Literally it means 'age-long' and is connected with

the belief in the existence of the two ages already spoken of (p. 1-3). But the words in *Matt.* xii. 32, 'neither in this age, nor in that which is to come' read like a direct protest against any attempt to reduce the meaning of the word to anything less than lasting through these two periods into which all time was divided. The utmost we can say is that no precision such as is attached to the mathematical use of the word 'infinity' was as yet connected with the Greek word (*æonian*) translated eternal, and still less with the Hebrew '*olâm*, which is its representative in the Old Testament.

30. Note the awkwardness in the style in this verse, marking the end of the interpolated passage.

31. His brethren. see note on vi. 3.

35. In a great cause fellow-work and sympathy make a kinship of spirit, and so Jesus declares his simple brotherhood with all who do the will of God.

§ 12. iv. 1-34. Teaching by Parables¹

[*Matt.* xiii. 1-35, v. 14-16, x. 26, xi. 15, vii. 2, vi. 33, *Luke* viii. 4-18, xiv. 35, vi. 38, xii. 31, xiii. 18, 19.]

In *Mark* ii. 17, 19-22, iii. 23, sq. we find Jesus using figurative illustrations in his argument, and the present section introduces one of the most authentic and striking of his 'parables.' This word describes a method of teaching which we find in the Old Testament (*Is.* v. 1-7, *Judges* ix. 8-15); but Jesus made it peculiarly his own, and it has secured an important place in the Gospel narratives through the comparative ease with which the

¹ *First Three Gospels.* p. 72.

memory retains a story. Children are often taught that a 'Parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning,' but this is a definition which itself needs a good deal of explaining. The best explanation is that which distinguishes between a parable and an allegory such as St. Paul uses in *Gal.* iv. 21-31. The distinction corresponds to that between a simile and a metaphor. In a *simile*, we say that something is like something else; in a *metaphor*, we say that something is something else. It is a *simile* when Homer says that an army on the march is like the flight of a flock of birds, or that a single warrior defying his enemies is like a lion standing at bay. It is a *metaphor*, when Jesus calls Herod a fox, *Luke* xiii. 32, or when John the Baptist addresses the Pharisees and Sadducees as 'Ye offspring of vipers,' *Matt.* iii. 7. Jesus uses a simile when he says, *Matt.* x. 16, 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' It would have been a metaphor if he had said, 'Be ye, at the same time, serpents and doves.' Now a parable is a story told in a series of similes; an allegory is a series of metaphors strung together so as to form a tale. A simile is useless and unsuitable unless the likeness described is clear and obvious, and it is one of the great excellencies of Homer that, while he employs an immense number of similes, he always chooses something thoroughly familiar to his hearers in order to help them realise something less familiar. In the same way, the merit of a parable consists in its taking a simple story of everyday life, thoroughly familiar to the experience of those addressed, and

using its actors and its incidents as a series of similes which will help the hearers to realise certain other facts, especially religious truths, which are less familiar to them. On the other hand, the use of a metaphor is largely to strike the imagination and excite the attention; the likeness is something of the nature of a riddle which has to be guessed; why should Jesus call Herod a fox? This same wider latitude is allowed in constructing an allegory; it is expected that some ingenuity will be required to find out its inner meaning, the likeness is purposely hidden that it may the more arouse the attention when discovered. One most important consequence of this distinction is the possibility of reversing the process of constructing allegories. Stories which were originally told as plain matter-of-fact narratives were afterwards supposed to be allegories, and to convey some hidden meaning because it was possible to put such a meaning into them. Thus a great many things were discovered which had never been hidden. Nevertheless, the supposed hidden meaning was regarded as the important truth conveyed in the original story, and taught there upon the authority of its author. The Jews of the time of Christ, especially those living out of Palestine, were extremely fond of this method of allegorising the stories of the Old Testament, and in this way they gave their ancient Scriptures the credit of having known and taught all the philosophy and other truth which passed current in the Greek culture of their day.

Nothing is more characteristic of the method of Jesus than that he taught, not by allegorising the

stories of Old Testament, but by speaking his own new parables. These appealed, not to the ancient authority of a sacred past, but to the moral and religious instincts of living men and women. It was part of his general plan of appealing to the consciences of his hearers, to the divine spirit which stirs in every human soul. He asked, 'How think ye?' and told the story of the lost sheep (*Matt.* xviii. 12-14) to illustrate the will of our Father that not one of the little ones should perish. He referred to the way men could interpret the signs of the weather, and asked (*Luke* xii. 56, 57) why they could not interpret those of the times, adding, 'And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' So it may be said that the simple parables of Jesus taught their whole religious lesson by virtue of their power to help his hearers to realise in their hearts some deep religious truth, some truth sufficiently like the similes in the story to be immediately suggested to, and recognised by, our faculty for discerning spiritual things. The parables of Jesus, therefore, needed no explanation, and it was a disappointment to him (*Mark* iv. 13) that his disciples would treat them as though they were allegories which he alone could correctly interpret. We need not doubt that he did in some cases, as in this instance of the parable of the Sower, give his hearers his own interpretation; but, as a general rule, the interpretation which follows the parables is regarded by modern critics as possessing very little claim to authenticity. All that was required to understand his meaning was a certain power to apprehend spiritual truth. When this was lacking, no interpretation could

explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God ; where this was present, explanation was seldom needed.

iv. 1. The word **again** starts a new story about some incident in the life of Jesus, as in ii. 13 and iii. 1 ; the **very great multitude** marks an advance on iii. 7 ; we have heard of the **boat** being made ready in iii. 9.

4. **The sower** scattered his seed broadcast by hand, as is still done in England where this process is not superseded by the use of the machine drill. **The way side**: a beaten track across the field, not separated from it by hedge or ditch.

5. **The rocky ground**. Here the solid rock lay but a little distance below the surface, and the shallow soil above would get very hot under the sun, and would force the plant to develop above ground with no corresponding extent of root below.

9. **Ears to hear**: an appeal to his audience to try and understand the meaning of his parable. Our appreciation of what we see and hear greatly depends on the use we make of our eyes and ears. The story of 'Eyes and no eyes' might be taken as a parable referring to religious truth as well as a story about 'common objects of the country,' and it might be supplemented by another story called 'Ears and no ears.'

10. **When he was alone**. As Jesus evidently continued addressing the multitude, verse 33, till the evening of the same day, ver. 35, when he departs in the boat to the other side of the lake, it would seem that this passage, vv. 10-20, is an explanation inserted afterwards in what was thought to be an appropriate place. **They that were about him with the twelve**. Followers like the hearers in the house, iii. 34. 35. Mark never mentions the seventy disciples of *Luke* x. 1, but he indicates the existence of a group of brethren midway between the multitude and the twelve, and to be away from the multitude was to be alone.

11. **Mystery**; inner meaning, or spiritual truth. **Them that are without**. A phrase used in the Pauline Epistles, *1 Cor.* v. 12, 13; *Col.* iv. 5; *1 Thess.* iv. 12; *1 Tim.*

its use here is an indication of lateness of the verse. In the early days of the Galilean ministry no distinction had been established between 'those within,' and 'those without,' and Jesus had declared that his special mission was to those who were outside the pale of the sympathy of strict Jews, ii. 17.

12. **See and not perceive**, a quotation from *Is.* vi. 9-10. It was part of the strict monotheism of the prophets of the eighth century B.C. that they should regard God as the direct cause of everything, evil as well as good; as the cause, therefore, of the blindness and stupidity of the people which prevented their understanding the divine warning, and repenting and being healed. And this blindness was to last till the consequent punishment had destroyed almost all in the land, and there was only a remnant left from which a truly righteous nation might grow up. This is terribly stern teaching about the divine penalties for sin. No doubt it has its application in extreme cases. Paul says of certain degraded idolators that 'God gave them up unto vile passions,' and 'unto a reprobate mind,' *Rom.* i. 26, 28; and *Ephes.* iv. 19, contains that phrase of fatal doom 'who being past feeling, gave themselves up to all lasciviousness.' Comp. *Mark* iii. 5. But this is not the message Jesus was now delivering to the multitude, and its application here to his teaching by parable is a most extraordinary misunderstanding on the part of the writer of the Gospel.

14. **Soweth the word.** Any teacher of the word of God, the word which God speaks in our hearts and consciences, is represented by the sower.

15. **By the wayside.** The 'word' is the same, equally good, in all four cases; but there is a class of hearers on whom it makes no impression; it never penetrates below the surface, they are thoroughly indifferent to all higher thoughts and higher life, and the good which they will not make the least effort to take in is almost immediately carried off by the evil influences which may be summed up in the one word, Satan.

16. **The rocky places**, where only a little soil lodged in the crevices, or just covered the surface. This is a different

class of hearers, on whom it is easy to make an impression, but whose nature is too shallow and frivolous for the impression to last; these are people who are always making good resolutions but never keep them, who are ready to undertake but cannot be trusted to perform, because they have no deep earnestness of character.

18. Among the thorns, those who are richly endowed by nature, who have earnestness and determination, and might do grand work for God, but whose talents can also be devoted to sheer money-making or getting on in the world, and in whom selfish ambition finally chokes all the higher aspirations of their early days.

20. This good ground may at one time have been rocky and shallow, or liable to be overrun with weeds, and the heart of a faithful disciple will not bear its richest fruit without prayerful effort and earnest watchfulness.

21. **Lamp.** Tables were not, and are not, found in Eastern houses, which would seem to us very bare of furniture generally, so a special stand had to be provided for the lamp unless it was to be left on the floor. Measures (and weights) of various kinds had long been in use (comp. *Lev. xix. 36, Ezek. xlv. 10*), and a bushel inverted over the small lamp generally employed would completely eclipse it. Round each room there often ran a raised seat, which with cushions, etc., was used as a bed at night. The connection of thought with what precedes may be thus explained: As the sower sows the word, so the lamp is meant to shed abroad the light of truth. The moral warning is against the misapplication of God's gifts and our own powers. Boys learn to read, and instead of using their power for good they sometimes use it only to read what does them harm.

22. **Nothing hid.** Jesus refuses to recognise any distinction between two kinds of teaching, one for an inner circle of disciples, the other for the outer world. The whole truth is to be offered to the whole world. This is in flat contradiction to the misunderstanding found in verses 11, 12.

24. **Take heed what ye hear:** take care of what I say unto you, that ye may be able to repeat it correctly, and

be in your turn as a sower and a lamp. In *Matthew* and *Luke*, the thoughts in verses 21-25 are found in different connection, showing that the tradition in this matter varied. See *First Three Gospels*, p. 79.

24, 25. The moral signification here is a continuation of the thought in verse 9. Whatever powers we have grow by use, and decay when not used. Everything we learn helps us to learn something more. Those who are inattentive lose even the power of learning they once had. This is true of ordinary education and still more true of the facts of spiritual life.

26. Here we return to a closer connection of thought with the parable of the Sower, and find one of the most striking and beautiful illustrations Jesus gives us of the Kingdom of God; and it is Mark only who has preserved it in its original form.

27. Comp. *1 Cor.* iii. 6, 7. When man has done all that he can do, it is very little compared with God's share of the work. James Mill pointed out that all human industry is confined to *moving* things from place to place, the forces of nature do all the rest of the work, alike in agriculture, manufacture, or commerce. So in spiritual work, we can only speak the word (or show the light of a good example); it is God who gives the increase, and we often know not how the growth is going on in the souls of other men.

28. The full corn is in the nominative case, making it emphatic; 'then comes the full corn in the ear.' These stages are named to show that there is a certain order of development in all natural growth, an order which we can seldom hasten and can never reverse. We must not try to put old heads on young shoulders; we must feed with milk before we feed with meat, *1 Cor.* iii. 2. Compare the account of St. Aidan's mission from Iona to Northumbria, B. Herford's *Story of Religion in England*, p. 49, sq. No foreign missions to the heathen can be successful which ignore this law of nature, and no work at home among the poor and degraded can be anything but a failure unless it seeks to improve human nature upon the lines on which human nature has,

as a matter of fact, improved in the past. For instance, two of the main factors of moral improvement in the past have been the acquisition of private property, and the affections of the family circle. In trying to 'do good' through the institutions connected with a Sunday school, or designed to influence the homes of the people, these two factors are are still two of the most effective forces we have at our disposal.

29. **The harvest.** St. Paul in *Gal.* vi. 7-9 makes use of the image of sowing and reaping. The early Christians thought of the end of the world as the harvest (*Matt.* xiii. 39); but there is another meaning which appeals more to us now, and which may have been foremost in the mind of Jesus. To all, death comes as a time of harvest, not putting an end to life, but bringing about a multiplication and enlargement of life, corresponding to the fact that every ripe grain of corn contains a living germ.

31. **Grain of mustard seed.** In *Dan.* iv. 10-12, we have a somewhat similar image of the growth of a great tree which represented the empire of Nebuchadnezzar; and *Ezek.* xvii. 22-24, speaks of the growth of a goodly young cedar under which 'shall dwell all fowl of every wing, in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell,' referring here to the establishment of a regenerated Israel. In his parable, Jesus calls special attention to the wonderful extent of the growth of a plant from a small seed. The ordinary mustard plant grows in Syria to a height of eight to twelve feet, and bears multitudes of tiny yellow seeds, which the little birds assemble in crowds to pick. Another tree, the *Salvadora Persica*, which grows to a height of twenty feet and bears a somewhat similar berry, has often been supposed to be the tree meant here, but its fruit is larger than mustard seed. The parable illustrates the outward growth and organization of the kingdom of God in such institutions as those of the Christian Church which afford support and shelter to the disciples. The corresponding parable of the leaven, *Matt.* xiii. 33, illustrating the invisible silent action of the kingdom on the heart, is wanting from

Mark, though quite in accordance with the representation here given of the teaching of Jesus.

34. A general description which we can readily accept, probably the nucleus out of which the interpretation, verses 10-12, may have grown. Jesus found parables the best teaching for the multitude, and privately to his own disciples he spoke more directly and fully of the deeper truths of God.

NOTE ON THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOM OF GOD.

We have spoken of the meaning which 'the kingdom of God' had for Jewish minds,¹ and we have now read some of the parables spoken by Jesus with the express purpose of teaching what he meant by these words. The prophets foretold an ideal future which grew dearer and dearer to Israel during the days when they suffered under the persecuting heathen. The hope in the time of Jesus took the form of a belief in two *ages*, that which then existed with all its familiar evils, and that which was to come, when the kingdom of God should be established upon earth, and this rule should succeed the dominion of all heathen power and unrighteous force. These two ages were to be separated by the Day of Judgment, a great and terrible Day of the Lord, a Day when the Power of God should be manifested from on high, when Heathenism should make its last struggle and be overthrown. This is but the barest outline of the popular conception at the time of Jesus, but it is enough to show by contrast the striking originality and spirituality of his teaching. He taught the truth now confirmed by every century of which we have the history, that the kingdom of God must come

¹ See above p. 1-3.

gradually, through a natural process of development, and will not be introduced by any sudden violent manifestation of divine energy. Such a new conception involves an absolute revolution of religious expectation. It resembles the revolution which has transformed the science of Geology. The study of the crust of the earth long ago revealed the existence of a series of ages which had succeeded one another, each in turn producing stupendous changes on the face of the globe. It was first supposed that this succession of ages was caused by the most violent cataclysms, convulsive manifestations of natural force which rapidly swept away one set of minerals and organisms, and substituted another set in their place. Geologists now believe that the succession of ages has been produced by forces very similar to those we now see in action, slowly and gradually altering the surface of the earth and the forms of life it supports, that there have never been any cataclysms, but that the long slow action of the rain and the rivers and the tides, together with the pressure exerted through the internal heat and gradual cooling of the earth, will account for the past geological history of our planet. Somewhat similar was the great religious discovery of Jesus. He saw in the divine forces then acting on human souls all the means requisite for bringing the kingdom of God from heaven to earth, provided sufficient time were allowed; and he saw that the divine method is to cause changes to come about by the slow, gradual, orderly action of those spiritual forces, not through violent cataclysms which might alter the outward appearance, but could not do the work of

the gradual inward development of the heart and conscience. That work, the really essential change, must come about as when a man should sow seed upon the earth, and it should grow slowly, silently, steadily; blade, ear, full corn, till the harvest is come.

§ 13. iv. 35-41. The Wind and the Sea obey him.¹

[*Matt.* viii. 18, 23-27, *Luke* viii. 22-25.]

The miracle related in this section is one which modern thinkers have peculiar difficulty in accepting as it stands. It is not a question here of the authority of Jesus influencing other human beings who thought themselves possessed by evil spirits, or who suffered under a sense of alienation from God which could be removed by assurance of divine forgiveness. We have here a case of direct control over the forces of outward Nature; the story means us to understand something which could be readily accepted in pre-scientific days, but which would now be regarded as a distinct violation of the great natural law of the conservation of energy. We cannot often trace the line of cause and effect which regulates the blowing of the wind, but no scientific man doubts that the direction and force of a storm are regulated by natural causes as precisely as the growing of the corn, and could be predicted, if we knew all the circumstances, as exactly as an eclipse; and any interference with this line of causa-

¹ *First Three Gospels*, pp. 193, 203, 284.

tion is to him inconceivable. But, be it observed, that which is scientifically inconceivable is not really attested here, and could not, from the nature of the case, be a matter for human testimony, viz., the causal connection between the words of Jesus and the changing of the storm to a calm. *Post hoc, non propter hoc.* The one thing followed the other, but was not necessarily caused by it. Let it be taken for granted that the boat was in danger from the storm, that Jesus was aroused in a moment of extreme peril, that soon after this they all found themselves in smooth water, sheltered and safe, what real evidence have we that the escape from danger differed from the many deliverances which we rightly call providential, but do not regard as violations of natural law? John Wesley had many a hairbreadth escape in his travels; some cases he notes in his journal as miraculous; we now think that in his case there is no ground for this assumption of supernatural interference. So a slight re-casting of the story about Jesus, reversing the process which may well have taken place when it was first told among the early disciples, will give us a narrative wholly free from incredible elements and very beautiful in its simple human truth. When even was come, Jesus was wearied with a long day's teaching, and anxious to escape from the multitude who perpetually thronged him in the neighbourhood of Capernaum. So he proposed to cross the lake in the boat from which he had been speaking. 'And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was.' He was probably no sailor, others now assumed the lead and took him across the water; he, wearied

out with his own work, went to sleep on a cushion in stern of the boat, and slept so soundly that even the storm did not wake him. But the moment difficulty and danger came, he was at once forced to the front. Is it not possible that his words of rebuke were really spoken, not to the wind, but to the panic-stricken sailors, as in verse 40, or that in some other way he infused into them a new courage and determination which helped materially to secure the safety of the vessel? There would then be a striking parallelism between this event and the story of Julius Cæsar, who said to a sailor who was his companion in a small boat, and was terrified by the roughness of the waves, 'Fear not, man, thou carriest Cæsar and all his fortunes.'

35. **The other side**, the eastern shore of the Lake. Apparently he had been at Capernaum, ii. 1.

36. **Other boats**, only mentioned by Mark; they indicate the determination of a considerable number of disciples to constantly follow him.

37. **A great storm of wind**. On the eastern shore of the lake are precipitous hills, reaching a height of a thousand feet, traversed by a few narrow gorges through which the wind might blow with great suddenness and violence. A boat, therefore, might pass quickly into a storm, and out again into a calm, under the shelter of some rock or point of land.

38. **Teacher**, or Rabbi. *Luke* viii. 24, 'Master, master'; *Matt.* viii. 25, 'Lord.'

39. **Peace, be still**, literally 'Be muzzled,' the same word which he addressed to the evil spirit in i. 25. See *First Three Gospels*, p. 193.

§ 14. v. 1-20. The Démoniac of Gerasa.¹[*Matt.* viii. 28-34, *Luke* viii. 23-39.]

This section relates a story plain enough in its main features, but involved in many difficulties of detail which have often absorbed far more attention than they deserve. The first difficulty is about the name of the place 'on the other side' of the lake where Jesus and his companions landed. The Authorised Version calls it the land of Gadara, an important city about ten miles to the south-east of the lake. But the best authorities for the text of *Mark* read 'Gerasenes,' not 'Gadarenes,' and Gerasa was another important city more than thirty miles further away from the lake in the same direction. However, a small village called Kersa has been discovered on the borders of the lake, just where it is wanted, about the middle of the eastern shore, close to which there is the only precipice which descends sheer into the lake, and it is supposed that this name indicates the existence there of an ancient town of Gerasa.² The important fact is that this 'country of the Gerasenes' was mainly heathen, though there were also many Jews settled there and living under their own Jewish law. Here Jesus met with a very bad case of madness, and treated it with his usual authoritative word of command; the man, too, acts in the usual way, recognising Jesus as the Messiah. After this we are told something quite unlike anything we have hitherto met with. The sufferer, identifying himself with the

¹ See *Life in Pal.* p. 24; *First Three Gospels*, p. 190.

² Comp. Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, ii. 374.

unclean spirit, says, 'my name is Legion; for we are many,' and then follow the urgent request of the demons that they may enter into a great herd of swine, the self-destruction of these swine, the cure of the demoniak, and the request of the inhabitants that Jesus would leave their neighbourhood. What are we to make of this story; how can we explain this miracle? Perhaps the most important thing for us to realize is that we have not to explain it; its central incident is not a fact at all; there are no evil spirits such as are here supposed capable of taking possession of a man, and passing from his body into the bodies of a herd of animals; these existed only in the imagination of the people who lived in those times. The real outward facts, the things which could happen, and doubtless did happen, are mainly two: a man was restored to his right mind, and a herd of swine was destroyed. Probably there was some connection between these two events. It is quite possible that the madman, in his excitement at meeting Jesus, rushed about and frightened the herd, and caused them to make a stampede down the precipice. Of course, this is no more than a guess, but we may be quite sure that if the stampede of the swine occurred, from any cause, in such a way that *could* be connected in thought with the cure of the man, this connection would be made in the minds of the persons present. To them, the most rational explanation of what took place would be that the demons went from the man who was cured to the swine whose mad act proved *their* possession; and the man himself, profoundly impressed with the conviction that the occurrence proved that the demons had left

him, would be the more thoroughly and permanently cured of his delusion. How could he ever again believe himself possessed by these spirits when he had seen them with his own eyes, as he would say, go into these swine?

The question has frequently been raised whether Jesus was responsible for the destruction of these animals, and whether he was justified in his act. Verse 13 implies this responsibility, saying 'And he gave them leave'; and the justification usually given is that the keepers of the swine must have been Jews who were breaking their own law in keeping the unclean animals, and who were, therefore, rightly punished by the loss. There is, however, no proof that the owners were Jews; and even if they were, there would be a high-handed fanaticism in this punishment of them which savours more of Elijah than of Jesus. It is more satisfactory to say that this whole conception of the demons beseeching Jesus and receiving his permission, is necessarily unhistorical; and, that being so, there is no real ground for making him responsible for the destruction which occurred.

A very striking religious lesson may be drawn from the final result of all that happened, and the way in which the inhabitants were affected by the respective gain and loss. The gain was a man restored to his right mind; the loss was of 2,000 pigs; the result was that they besought Jesus to depart. How would it be with ourselves now, if we had to strike a similar balance of profit and loss, say, for instance, between so many drunkards restored to sobriety and so much pecuniary loss by the closing of public-houses?

v. 2. **Out of the tombs.** There are caves in the limestone rock along the shore which were used as tombs, and also as dwellings for tribes living in a state of savagery. Similar caves are found near Gadara.

4. **To tame him.** The one idea of 'taming' a madman was to employ physical force, an idea which prevailed widely till the days of Dorothea Dix. Fetters for the hands and feet, made of wood, are probably meant here.

5. **Crying out and cutting himself.** Compare the religious frenzy in *1 Kings* xviii. 28. The weapons of the priests of Baal were probably of bronze or iron, but the use of chipped flints for cutting implements (*Ex.* iv. 25) long survived the introduction of metal, and the madman would find some such stone his handiest tool.

7. **What have I to do with thee?** Cp. *1 Kings* xvii.

18. **Son of the Most High God,** a distinct recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, showing that the man was probably a Jew.

9. **Legion,** the name of a division in the Roman army, composed of about 6,000 men of all arms; what we now call an army-corps. **We are many,** the sufferer speaks in the name of the army of evil spirits which he supposes to be inside him.

14. **The city** may be the comparatively distant Gadara, or it may be the smaller town of Gerasa close to the shore of the lake, see above, p. 58.

19. **Suffered him not.** The man though seemingly cured, was not fit for the strain of a life of following Jesus in the literal sense. Jesus, therefore, sends him home, bidding him tell his friends of the divine mercy in his cure. **The Lord,** not Jesus, but God, as *Luke* viii. 39 shows. The man thus became the first missionary to the heathen.

20. **Decapolis, i.e.,** the district of the Ten Cities, lying chiefly to east of the Jordan and south of the lake.

§ 15. v. 21-43. **The daughter of Jairus,
and the woman healed by faith.**

[*Matt.* ix. 18-26; *Luke* viii. 40-56.]

Jesus had not found good soil for the word on the other side of the lake, so he now returns to Capernaum, and is immediately surrounded by the multitude whom he hoped to escape by crossing the water. Moreover, he was at once sought after for the exercise of that gift of healing which had begun to interfere so seriously with his function as a teacher of religion. There is a pathetic touch in the narrative, hardly noticed by the narrator, and more and more lost in later accounts, which tells us of the constant thronging of these crowds, ver. 24, eager to get that which they were able to value, and apparently so heedless of the teaching of Jesus. It is a most significant fact that our earliest Gospel gives us so many of these wonderful stories of bodily cures, and such short reports of the teaching. This raising of the daughter of Jairus is the one instance in which all three synoptics relate a case of raising the dead; and here, the question arises whether Jesus meant literally what he said in the words 'the child is not dead, but sleepeth,' ver. 39. It was not unusual for the early Christians to speak of death as a sleep (*1 Cor.* vii. 39; xi. 30; xv. 6, 18-20; *1 Thess.* iv. 13-15; *John* xi. 11), and this fact may have had an influence on the story in two different ways. On the one hand, Jesus may have meant to say, 'There is no such a thing as death; all death is only sleep.' But this was not the way he was understood by the people who 'laughed

him to scorn.' They certainly thought he was speaking literally, and not figuratively. On the other hand, therefore, Jesus may have had reason to believe that the girl was only in a trance, and said so; and then the early Christian custom of regarding all death as a sleep would cause the disciples to suppose, as the story certainly means us to understand, that Jesus had spoken figuratively, and that there was a real restoration from death to life.

In the incident which occurred on the way, we must distinguish between what a disciple could have seen, and would report as an eye-witness, and what must have been only an inference on his part. How could an eye-witness know that Jesus perceived that power proceeding from him had gone forth? This is obviously an inference from the fact that Jesus stopped and asked 'Who touched me?' He does not tell the woman that some mysterious power proceeding from himself had cured her, but says, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' which is precisely the explanation of the case which a modern doctor would give. The intense nervous excitement of the woman, her *belief* that, if she could touch his garment, this would effect her cure, her joy in succeeding in her attempt—these are well known conditions sufficient to account for what happened.

v. 21. **By the Sea.** We may suppose that Jesus keeps near the lake shore for the purpose of avoiding the throng, and teaching the people from the boat as he had previously done; but he is too kind-hearted to refuse to go with Jairus when urgently requested.

22. **Rulers of the Synagogue.** There were several elders in charge of each synagogue, with a chief ruler at their

head, also a minister or school-master who had charge of the sacred books. See Note on *Mark* i. 21. *Life in Pal.* p. 104-6.

23. **Lay thy hands on her.** Jairus thought that the Teacher's personal touch would be needed, cp. *2 Kings*, v. 11. Luke and Matthew relate a story of a centurion who asked Jesus to cure a favourite slave without going to the sufferer's bedside, simply by 'saying a word,' *Luke* vii. 7, *Matt.* viii. 8. **Made whole.** The same word as saved. Salvation is moral and spiritual wholeness or health.

26. **Many physicians.** Luke, being a physician himself (*Col.* iv. 14) softens down this charge against his profession (viii. 43); but the whole act of healing was at this time involved in such gross and offensive superstition that we can readily believe anyone would grow worse under the approved treatment of the day, comp. vi. 13.

27. **Having heard.** The fame of Jesus roused hope and expectation in her mind which worked her cure.

29. **Plague,** literally 'scourge,' a good example of a metaphor.

35. **The Master,** better, with the margin, 'the Teacher.'

37. **Peter and James and John.** Our first indication of an innermost circle of the most trusted disciples. Comp. ix. 2 and xiv. 23. Jesus tried to associate others with him in his work, and sought their sympathy and friendship. As we shall see, he was fated to live a lonely life, but this was not because he held himself aloof from his disciples.

38. **A Tumult.** The local custom of mourning the dead was very similar to the Irish wake; but as burial in the hot climate had often to be effected on the actual day of the death, the whole proceeding was much more summary.

41. **Talitha cumi.** Mark alone preserves these words of address, the very words which Peter doubtless heard, *First Three Gospels*, p. 288. They are Aramaic, a Syrian dialect mainly derived from the old Hebrew which the Jews had already ceased to speak. This Aramaic, not the Greek in which the Gospel was written, must have been the original language in which Jesus preached the word.

43. **Charged them much.** Jesus again does his utmost to prevent people from telling exaggerated stories and spreading his fame as a wonder worker. We have the writer's point of view in this phrase 'that no man should know this.' Jesus would probably have said 'that no man should receive a misleading report of what had taken place.' The command to give the girl something to eat shows the recollection of an eye-witness.

§ 16. vi. 1-6. The Visit to Nazareth.

[*Matt.* xiii. 53-58, *Luke* iv. 16-30.]

This short section is full of instructive touches from which we may learn much respecting the real life of Jesus. The astonishment of his fellow-townsmen is testimony to the quiet life Jesus had been living at Nazareth previous to the preaching of John the Baptist. In *Mark*, Jesus is himself called 'the carpenter,' and as there is no mention of Joseph, either here or in iii. 31-35, we may reasonably infer that he was dead, and that Jesus, his eldest son, had been carrying on his trade before he left Nazareth. But we must not for a moment suppose that Jesus was despised, or thought incapable of teaching, because he was 'only a carpenter.' The greatest Rabbis or Teachers were all what we should call artizans, *i.e.*, they had been taught a trade and could earn their living by it, and as a rule, they did largely support themselves by the work of their hands. It was the fact that these inhabitants of Nazareth remembered him as a child, and that they knew all about his family, which made

them think they knew all about Jesus, so that they were unwilling to recognise in him one greater than themselves. And this feeling is sadly too true to human nature, now as well as then, here as well as there. There is no real ground for supposing that these brothers and sisters were only half-brothers or cousins; that is an idea of the later church, and we have a right to believe that Jesus was one, probably the oldest, of a numerous family. This James is spoken of as 'the Lord's brother,' *Gal.* i. 19; and presumably he is the James of *Gal.* ii. 12, whose Jewish orthodoxy is so rigid. Later accounts of him confirm this character, and it all harmonises well with the fact that Jesus received no support from his own home in taking the position he did. For when he speaks of himself as a prophet he claims a very high religious office, but one which exactly describes his position. A Rabbi, however great, taught nothing except as a comment on the Law of Moses, or the Tradition of the Elders. Jesus taught as one having authority direct from God, and this is precisely the claim made by every prophet who utters the word 'Thus says the Lord,' or to whom the 'word of the Lord' comes as a message which he is charged to deliver. And it is these men who speak new religious truth, and do not merely expound that which is already recognised as authoritative, who are refused all honour by those of their own time and place. In this passage, Mark clearly recognises limitations to the Master's power, and connects them with their true cause, *viz.*, this want of appreciation of his true prophetic function. Nothing could be more instructive

for the distinction between the conditions requisite for mighty spiritual work and the old idea of miracles as evidence of divine truth. If miracles had been the evidences of Christianity, they should have been most clear and convincing when the unbelief was greatest. Instead of this, what we find is another illustration of the lesson taught in the Parable of the Sower, viz., that good seed will not bring forth fruit unless the soil also is good. This unbelief was a great contrast to the faith, and even the credulity, which collected the thronging crowds of Capernaum. Jesus marvelled at it as a new and saddening experience, and went his way, teaching, through other villages of Galilee.

1. **His own country.** This, as we know from i. 9, was Nazareth.

2. *Luke* iv. 16-30 gives us a much fuller though later account of this visit, which may be compared for the purpose of filling in details. But *Mark* gives a vivid statement of the important facts, and we can easily picture the crowded synagogue and the attitude of the people who may have heard exaggerated reports of the cures and of the influence exercised by the preaching of Jesus, and who were disposed to be incredulous in regard to all these reports (i. 28, 45, iii. 7, 21, v. 20). The marginal reading 'powers' means power to work miracles or perform other wonderful achievements which would be taken as a proof of divine support. *Comp. 1 Cor.* xii. 10, 28, 29.

3. **The Carpenter.** Paul was a tent-maker, *Acts* xviii. 3. **Offended,** 'caused to stumble' (same word as 'scandalised'), they were like persons tripped up by something in walking or running.

5. *Comp. First Three Gospels*, pp. 188 and 281.

6. Not a word here to tell us more about this teaching!

Such an absence of information in the earliest narrative shows what difficulty there must have been in getting the undiluted and uncoloured word of Jesus at a later time.

§ 17. vi. 7-13. The Mission of the Twelve.

[*Matt. x. 1-15, Luke ix. 1-6.*¹]

Here we have the earliest and much the briefest account of how Jesus sent his disciples forth to preach and of the instructions he first gave them. We can easily imagine how important this occasion, and all that was then said, seemed to the disciples after the death of Jesus, when his work was left wholly in their hands, and how they would try to remember every word that he then spoke, and how the tradition would gradually grow, and be moulded by the different views of narrators and writers. Here we need concern ourselves only with the account in *Mark*, and there are several important points to notice. (1) The Twelve are sent out, not singly, but in pairs, and this is a principle of missionary work which has again and again been found to be of inestimable value. One may chase a thousand, while two put to flight, not two, but ten thousand (*Deut. xxxii. 30*); an illustration of the enormous moral and religious support afforded by the companionship of even one other kindred soul. (2) Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits; he felt that what he had done they could do, and that his method of healing the afflicted might be as effective in their hands as in his. (3) He

¹ See *First Three Gospels*, p. 330.

reduces their personal luggage to a walking-stick. In connection with this we must, however, remember the climate and the customs of the people. These preaching disciples would be sure to receive sufficient hospitality: and the one additional caution he deems it necessary to give them is against changing their host (presumably for better accommodation). They were to do their work by establishing relations of intimate friendship. (4) In leaving any place which would not receive them, they were to offer the impressive but perfectly inoffensive testimony of shaking off the dust from their feet. Such a sign reminds us of the illustrations frequently employed by the old Hebrew prophets (*Jer.* xxiv., xxviii.); it was a parable in action, something that would be better remembered, and might have more effect, than any words. Here again, the information about what these missionaries were to preach is of the most meagre kind. It is not, however, unimportant. The preaching was obviously to be a continuation of that charge to repent and prepare for the coming kingdom of God which had been uttered by the Baptist (i. 4), and had been taken up by Jesus (i. 14, 15) as the gospel of God. It is equally obvious that the Twelve were *not* sent out now to proclaim that the kingdom had come, or that the Messiah had appeared. At present, the only thing attempted is the work of preparation, so that men might be ready when the great day of the Lord should come.¹

7. **The twelve**, a valuable early indication of the exist-

¹ *First Three Gospels*, p: 276. Also note on i. 4, and pp. 53-55.

ence of a definite body, otherwise known as apostles, comp. iii. 14, 15.

8. **Wallet**, an old English word for a satchel or sling-bag. Comp. *1 Cor.* ix. 14.

9. Here is a break in the grammatical construction characteristic of Mark, indicating Peter's recollections. The second coat would be an incumbrance in walking; they must trust to hospitality for the night. Comp. *Deut.* xxiv. 12, 13.

11. The latter half of this verse as given in the Authorised Version is not found in the best MSS., and is omitted from the Revised Version; cp. *Matt.* x. 15, xi. 24; *Luke* x. 12.

13. A simple unexaggerated statement; they were successful in many of their cases. Compare the method of healing with oil, spoken of in the Epistle of *James* v. 14. The 'Peculiar People,' unfortunately, have taken this as a permanent instruction for all Christians; and to this day often refuse to call in a doctor when anyone is ill. The real truth seems to be that 'anointing with oil' was one of the best methods of healing many sicknesses known in those days of medical ignorance. It was better than relying on heathenish superstitions and magical spells, and gave nature more chance than was afforded by much else of the physician's art. See the account given by Pliny of what were considered scientific methods of healing in his time, quoted in Hausrath's *New Testament Times*, i. p. 131, *note*; comp. v. 26.

§ 18. vi. 14-29. Herod and John the Baptist.

[*Matt.* xiv. 1-12, *Luke*, ix. 7-9, iii. 18-20.]

The king here mentioned is Herod Antipas, a younger son of Herod the Great,¹ who had died B.C. 4. Antipas was the Tetrarch or ruler of Galilee and

¹ *Life in Palestine*, p. 75.

Peræa for more than forty years, being banished in 39 A.D. His brother Philip was ruler of a Syrian highland district further to the north-east, which had also formed part of the dominions of his father. But it was not Philip's wife that Herod Antipas married, but the wife of another half-brother also named Herod. Antipas had previously been married to a daughter of King Aretas (mentioned in *2 Cor.* xi. 32), and his adulterous connection with Herodias led to a war between him and Aretas in which he was beaten. In several respects it is difficult to believe that the present section gives a correct historical account of the relations between Antipas and John, and of the death of the latter. According to the historian Josephus, *Ant.* xviii. 5, 2, John was confined in a lonely fortress to the east of the Dead Sea, and this feast (verse 21) to Herod's lords and chief men of Galilee must have been given at the palace at Tiberias, at a distance of two or three days' journey from the prison, whereas verses 27 and 28 imply that it was close by. Moreover Josephus tells us that John was shut up in prison because Herod was afraid of a political disturbance as the result of his preaching the coming of the kingdom of God; and this seems more probable than that John ever had an opportunity of personally rebuking Herod for his conduct, and so exciting the ill-will of Herodias. There are Old Testament analogies in *1 Kings* xix. 1, 2, xxi. 5-10, *Esther* v. 2, 3, 6, vii. 2, which may have helped to shape the story, which is here inserted parenthetically in the middle of the account of the mission of the Twelve, and can hardly have formed part of the original

Gospel narrative. Still, all these objections are not fatal to the accuracy of the main features of the story, which certainly represents a very early belief respecting the fate of John.

The binding force of such an oath as Herod swore, raises a question somewhat similar to that involved in the story of Jephthah's vow (*Judges* xi. 29-40). The moral problem involved may perhaps be solved by the following consideration. An oath or vow is of the nature of an agreement or compact with God. Where all the parties to an agreement are willing to give it up, it may be abandoned. To suppose, therefore, that a man is bound to do a wicked deed because of an oath, is to suppose that God is unwilling to modify or annul the agreement; and this is a supposition that can be made by no one who believes that God speaks to us in conscience, and that in telling us our duty He reveals to us His will.

14. **His name**, the name of Jesus which had become known through the mission of the Twelve just narrated. There was considerable readiness at this time to believe that a man might be raised from the dead and might return to earth to work great wonders.

15. See notes on i. 2, and ix. 11-13.

20. **Herod feared John**. The king could imprison the prophet; he could not shake off the fear inspired by the knowledge of his holy life. **Heard him gladly**, so 'the common people heard' Jesus 'gladly,' xii. 37, shortly before the mob were yelling for his death.

21. **Convenient**, for the design of Herodias.

22. **Daughter of Herodias**. The best MSS. read 'his daughter Herodias,' but this is probably a mistake. Herodias had a daughter Salomé who would be at least twenty years old (her mother being nearly fifty) and perhaps

already a widow, hardly in any case 'a damsel.' These are some of the many difficulties of the whole passage.

25. A *charger*, a large dish, but the word is now obsolete in this sense.

§ 19. vi. 30-44. Feeding the Five Thousand.¹

[*Matt.* xiv. 13-21, ix. 36, *Luke* ix. 10-17.]

We now continue the narrative interrupted after verse 13, and are told of the return of the Twelve, here called the Apostles, from their mission, and of the report they make to Jesus. The next verse (31) contains one of those graphic touches peculiar to Mark which are among the strongest indications of the faithful recollections of one who had been present on the occasion. It also reveals a beautiful trait in the character of Jesus.² He would not overwork the willing disciple; there must be periods of rest intervening in all this bustle of coming and going; tired, harassed men are not the best teachers of Gospel truths, or the most capable servants of the Kingdom of God. But this thoughtful consideration for his disciples introduces another narrative, showing how difficult it was for Jesus to avoid the constant pressure of a great crowd. The people see the boat going off from Capernaum, they note the direction of its course, and run round the shore of the lake to the desert spot where Jesus had hoped for rest and quiet. And he who had been thoughtful for his disciples, now has

¹ *First Three Gospels*, p. 208-211. ² *Ibid* p. 284.

compassion on the multitude. In reading the phrase, 'sheep not having a shepherd,' we must not think of sheep safely tended within the hedges of an English field, but of a flock wandering over a country altogether unenclosed, a flock obliged to be constantly on the move to find sufficient grass and water, accustomed to follow a shepherd, and the very type of piteous helplessness when left without his leadership. Jesus felt that God's people were perishing for lack of knowledge, and 'he began to teach them many things'—not a word of which is given us in *Mark*. Instead, we have another wonderful story, the truth and meaning of which are very hard to understand. Some have taken it as a symbolical illustration of the teaching of Jesus after the manner so beautifully indicated in *John* vi. There we read, verse 35, 'Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' The whole chapter leads our thoughts up from the food which sustains the lower bodily life, to that which is required to feed the spiritual life of the soul. It all reads like a parable and its explanation. We know that very early in the Christian community arrangements were made for feeding the poorer members. For this, deacons were appointed (*Acts* vi. 1-6), and Paul was zealous in collecting alms (*Gal.* ii. 10; *Rom.* xv. 25; *1 Cor.* xvi. 1; *2 Cor.* viii.; ix.). This inevitably drew followers who cared more for the loaves than the truths (*John* vi. 26); and all this early experience of the Church may have had something to do with shaping the story as it now stands in *Mark*. It is hopeless to attempt to rationalise the

miracle. Of course there may have been some foundation in fact, some 'organization of charity' indicated in the arrangement of the people by companies; but we have now no materials out of which to construct what is really a new and different tale. In the story as we have it, there are valuable religious elements in the blessing (ver. 41), and the gathering up the broken pieces (43), so as to avoid all waste of the divine bounty.

37. **Pennyworth.** Penny is used as a translation of the word *denarius*, which was the name of a Roman silver coin worth about eightpence halfpenny, and representing an ordinary day's wage (*Matt.* xx. 2). *Comp.* xii. 15. The disciples had a common purse, and this may have now contained about 200 *denarii*, so that if they spent all they had they could only provide for the 5,000 at the rate of one 'pennyworth' for every twenty-five persons. **Bread.** Loaves were usually made of barley, *John* vi. 9, 13.

41. He blessed, *comp.* viii. 6; xiv. 22.

§ 20. vi. 45-52. Walking on the sea.¹

[*Matt.* xiv. 22-33.]

This is another story of an event which, as narrated, involves an interference with the laws of nature of the most decisive kind, a miracle very different from the cure of demoniacs by the exercise of a spiritual authority which could be recognised by the human spirit. Walking on the sea would require the suspension of the Law of Gravitation, by which God controls

¹ *First Three Gospels*, p. 202-5.

the motions of the planets and the falling of the rain-drop, and which has become to us the very type of divine order. When men looked to what was strange and unaccountable for proof of God's presence and activity, such a story as this was regarded as evidence of divine energy. When men come to see that evidence of God's existence and will must be found in the laws of nature themselves, not in any interference with them, then these stories become difficulties, not aids, to religious faith. What chiefly relieves us from the necessity of either believing the literal truth of miraculous narratives, or dismissing them as intentional falsehoods, is the discovery that in certain states of popular feeling, combined with complete ignorance of science, miraculous stories are sure to spring up in connection with religion. We have often had such conditions in Roman Catholic countries. In our own time, we have had some remarkable exhibitions of it at Lourdes, where, without any intention to deceive, stories about the appearance of the Virgin Mary are told and believed among a devout and unenlightened peasantry. A similar condition of religious excitement, combined with an entire absence of critical judgment and ignorance of the requirements of evidence, prevailed in Palestine at the time of Jesus. In such a state of mind, stories, which we with our modern training, should regard as the invention of a vivid imagination, are told by the narrator with full conviction that he is telling the truth. This is what has happened again and again in religious history, and we cannot doubt that it has influenced the composition of the Gospel narratives.

However, we have some evidence that we are now entering on a portion of St. Mark's Gospel which did not originally belong to it, upon a long interpolation, in fact, which is not directly founded on the recollections of Peter. Hitherto, nearly all that Mark has told us is substantially reproduced in *Luke*, but now *Mark* vi. 19–viii. 26 is wanting from *Luke*. There has been such close verbal correspondence hitherto, that we feel sure Luke must have had the original *Mark* before him when he wrote; and he would hardly have left out the whole of this long passage if he had found it in his copy. It reappears in *Matthew*, but this Gospel, in its present form, is believed to be the latest of the three. But this is not all. We need only read *Mark* carefully to learn that there is a great insertion here. In vi. 45, Jesus sends the disciples 'before him unto the other side, to Bethsaida,' and in viii. 22, we read 'And they come to Bethsaida.' The other journeys and episodes described in the interval could not possibly have occurred during the short voyage across the lake from 'the desert place' (vi. 32) to Bethsaida, a town on the left bank of the Jordan as it enters at the north east of the lake. Of course it is possible that *Mark* viii. 22 refers to another journey to Bethsaida, but it is far more probable that the story originally passed straight from the Feeding of the Five Thousand to the cure of the blind man at Bethsaida, and the crisis which speedily followed at Caesarea Philippi. This would be characteristic of the extreme rapidity of action which has hitherto distinguished *Mark*, and which is altogether suspended in the episodes recorded in these intervening chapters. So rapid a narrative is,

however, as we have already noticed, extremely tantalising; we want to know a great deal more than we are told; and it is quite possible that the original writer himself inserted here, at a later date, some new material supplied by early Christian tradition.

Even if this passage is a later insertion, it by no means follows that its main features are unauthentic. It would merely be one step further removed from the facts as they actually occurred, and we should expect to find rather more of the influence of the early Church, and rather less of the real personality of Jesus. But we may still find a record of the impression which he made on the minds of his immediate disciples, and may learn much from the kind of tradition handed down from the first teachers of the story of his life. We have heard how he endeavoured to secure to his disciples a little rest from their labours, and how his attempt was frustrated by the pertinacious following of the crowd. Now he seeks the same end by constraining (ver. 45, it is a strong word) his disciples to go off by the boat, while he remains behind and sends the multitude away. Thus he succeeds in getting the people to return to their homes, and then 'he departed into the mountain to pray.' This we are told as though the writer were describing a frequent or habitual action on the part of Jesus. It repeats what we heard in i. 35, where we have already noticed the impression made on the disciples by the retirement of Jesus for prayer to God. While he was among men he was giving all and receiving little in return. This could not go on without a break; he must have times when he could be alone with God and receive everything from Him.

47. **Even**, in the sense of darkness: we have already heard that the day was far spent (35) and much had happened since then.

48. The fourth watch was the last of the periods into which the night was divided; say, between three and six a.m. **Walking on the sea**. Old Testament analogies may be found in *Job* ix. 8, *Psalms* lxxvii. 19, *Is.* xliii. 2, 16. Comp. also *Ex.* xiv. 15-31, *Josh.* iii. 7-17, *2 Kings* ii. 8-14.

51, 52. Very similar to iv. 39-41, but the reference here to the loaves is not quite what we should expect. Probably the writer meant that men who had just seen the miracle of the feeding of the multitude ought not to have been amazed at anything which Jesus did, and would not have been if their hearts had not been hardened. It has always been a difficulty to orthodox critics to explain why the miracles had so little influence on those who actually witnessed them.

§ 21. vi. 53-56. Healing the sick, summarized.

[*Matt.* xiv. 34-36.]

These four verses do not carry on the original narrative, but give a brief summary of the work of healing which was so important a feature in the Galilean ministry.

53. **Gennesaret**, the rich fertile plain which stretched nearly four miles long and one and a half broad, between Magdala and Dalmanutha on the west shore of the lake (*Life in Palestine*, p. 17). Capernaum was in the centre of this plain.

55. **Beds**, a sort of litter, or stretcher, convenient for carrying about 'those that were sick,' ii. 3-12.

56. There are many similar cases in mediæval and even modern times, where the religious excitement caused by touching a sacred relic has been instrumental in curing a disease.

The Port-royal miracle is one of the best authenticated, as it was closely and adversely criticised by the Jesuits of the time. A niece of Pascal had a disease in one of her eyes which the doctors proposed to heal by burning with red-hot iron. The poor girl greatly dreaded the operation, and obtained leave to touch her eye with a 'Holy Thorn,' believed to be from the real crown of thorns worn by Jesus. The eye after this immediately began to heal, and the operation was never performed. See Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, p. 685.

§ 22. vii. 1-23. Defilement, real and unreal.¹

[*Matt.* xv. 1-20.]

This is a most important section, containing several points which require to be clearly understood. The religious movement in Galilee had attracted the attention of the authorities at Jerusalem, who came down to inquire whether the new zeal was showing itself in stricter observance of their Law, or in any departure from its precepts. They soon found fault with the disciples for eating with 'defiled, that is, unwashen hands.'

(1) The first point to notice here is that it is not a question of what we call cleanliness. What the Scribes and Pharisees meant by cleanliness was not a personal habit, but a matter of ceremonial law. If a dead insect fell upon a Jew, or he jostled against a Gentile in the public street, he was declared to be unclean, and he must wash, or baptise himself, in accordance with many equally artificial rules before he might eat a meal. A similar system of purifications applied to the washing, or sprinkling, of cooking

¹ *Life in Palestine*, p. 125•134.

vessels and other household furniture. This is explained in verses 3 and 4 for the benefit of converts who would not be familiar with Jewish customs, probably for the church at Rome, and we may note that the ancient Romans, and to a large extent also the Greeks, were extremely cleanly in the real sense, providing great public baths in all large cities, and bringing thither pure water in huge aqueducts.

(2) The next point to note is the meaning of the 'Tradition of the Elders.' It was an expedient for attaching the authority of Moses to the later teaching of the Scribes. After the Pentateuch was closed, no more could be added to the written Law of Moses. But many of the laws were only the brief expressions of ancient usage, and others had gathered round them explanations concerning the rites or customs with which they dealt. These explanations, it was believed, came from the same Mosaic source, and when the Scribes tried to imagine how they had all arisen, they supposed, for it was only a supposition, that Moses had communicated many instructions by word of mouth to the seventy Elders (of whose appointment we read in *Num.* xi. 16, 17, 23-29), and that these Elders had handed down these instructions to their successors, who passed it on from generation to generation, the teachers of each age imparting it to their disciples. Thus they had an oral tradition, which was not unalterably fixed in writing, but could be modified to suit what they considered the requirements of the case, while it could still claim, in every form, the authority of Moses. When the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples do not keep this

tradition of the Elders, he replies by denouncing it as a mere human invention, opposed to the commandment of God (verse 8). The next verses (9-13) give a further illustration, showing how the commandment of God was rejected by this tradition. Jesus speaks of the writings ascribed to Moses in the Old Testament in the manner natural to a Jew. He had been taught that Moses wrote the whole of the Pentateuch, and that he was divinely inspired to do so. This teaching Jesus doubtless accepted without any further thought or inquiry. The questions raised by modern criticism probably never entered his mind, any more than the questions raised by modern science. They are not, directly, religious questions; and while we may believe Jesus to be the greatest religious teacher who has ever lived on this earth, we can quite consistently say that we do not regard him as an authority in matters of ancient history or recent science; and, moreover, we can be quite sure that he would not wish to be so regarded. It is, however, interesting to note that while Jesus accepted the Mosaic authorship and divine inspiration of the Pentateuch, this did not prevent his dealing freely with its contents whenever he felt divine inspiration in his own soul speaking on the same subject. In the written Word he found a record of what God had said to them of old; in the highest feelings of his own heart he found what God was there and then speaking to him, and desiring him to speak, as His prophet, to the world. We shall have a further instance of this in *Mark* x. 1-12. The word 'Corban' literally means 'gift,' and came to be applied to religious offerings, and so to the

temple-treasury in which they were deposited, *Matt.* xxvii. 6. The Scribes allowed men to give money to that, and regarded the gift as a meritorious act, even when the parents of the giver were suffering for want of money. The principle upon which Jesus falls back is far-reaching. We are to perform our duties to God by doing our duties to men; and the natural ties of relationship determine many of these fundamental duties in a way that no later obligations can alter. Very likely Jesus, the eldest son, had worked hard at home helping to support the family till his brothers and sisters were grown up. The same sound moral view of the filial relation is found in *Prov.* xxviii. 24.

(3) It seems to us so much a matter of course that a man is morally defiled not by what he eats, but by what he thinks, says, and does, that we must make some effort to realise how strongly the opposite view was taken in the time of Jesus. Certain kinds of food were absolutely forbidden, such as pork, not because it was considered unwholesome, but because their religious law forbade every Jew to touch it. Thus it was strictly forbidden to eat meat and milk, or anything made with meat and with milk, at the same time, because the Law said 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk,' and all possibility of this being done within the human body must be avoided. Very complicated arrangements in the larder resulted. So too, all meat that might be eaten must be killed in a particular way in order that the blood might be drained out of it before it was cooked. All these regulations are in full force among the strict Jews to the present day. And, finally, meat killed by heathen

butchers, as well as other food brought to the open market, would very probably have been prepared with idolatrous rites of sacrifice, involving the recognition of the false heathen deities; therefore, such food had to be avoided. In the early Christian Church, it became a question of great importance how far the disciples were to abide by these Jewish restrictions, or how far they might consider themselves free from them. We find much said on this subject both in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul,¹ but not any direct reference there to this passage in *Mark* or even to the general language of Jesus. Our Gospels were not recognised as 'Scripture,' and quoted as authorities, till long after this early controversy had ceased.

vii. 1. This reference to Jerusalem reminds us of the same reference in iii. 22; possibly the occasion referred to is the same, but its true date unknown.

3. Wash their hands. *Lev. xv. 1-13* gives directions for washing in case of certain impurities, but the scribes, in their usual way, wanted to go a great deal further than the written Law enjoined. Comp. *Life in Pal.* p. 128-130.

6. See *Is. xxix. 13*. It is a free quotation from the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament originally made in Egypt for the Jews of Alexandria, and then widely employed in the Greek cities round the Mediterranean. *Life in Pal.* p. 37, 8.

14. Hear me. Jesus makes this dispute the occasion for proclaiming to the multitude a great religious principle, which he prefaces with words calling their attention as in iv. 3.

17. The parable. To us the statement seems plain enough, but the disciples simply could not believe it literally,

¹ *Acts xv. 5-29; Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. viii.; ix. 22; x. 18-33; 1 Tim. iv. 3-5.*

it was so contrary to all they had been taught, they thought it must be a parable.

18-23. This passage may remind us how very modern is a correct knowledge of the human mind and body. But the distinction made by Jesus is sufficiently clear in its moral and religious aspects. When we eat anything, we do not thereby make it part of ourselves in the same important sense as what we think and say and do is part of ourselves. The real 'self' is the mind or soul which feels and wills, not the body which is the instrument through which the soul receives feelings and executes the will. A 'man' is not defiled by what only affects his body, the important question is whether his mind is clean in its thoughts, pure in its desires.

19. **Heart.** We use this word to express the emotional side of human nature, and speak of the head as the seat of the intellect. But throughout the Bible we find this distinction placed, as it were, a story lower down. The heart is regarded as the seat of the intellect ('The fool has said in his heart there is no God,' *Ps. xiv. 1*), and also to some extent of the will, or of the mind as a whole, as here in verses 19, 21; while the emotions were generally located in the various organs situated beneath the diaphragm, *i.e.* in the abdomen. This usage may have been connected with the sacrificial custom of offering these parts upon the altar. Of course, no part of the body, not even the brain, can in strict speech be used as more than a symbol of feelings and thoughts which occupy no space. But such words as heart, and reins, *i.e.* kidneys, are frequently used in the Bible as symbols of the mind, and we should learn to understand what mental powers they are intended to denote.

§ 23. vii. 24-30. Visiting the neighbourhood of Tyre.¹

[*Matt.* xv. 21-28.]

The declaration made by Jesus to the multitude concerning defilement was a declaration of war against the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees, and rendered a struggle inevitable. But Jesus did not wish to precipitate a conflict, and desired therefore to withdraw from public notice and Jewish opposition. For this purpose he left Galilee and entered the Phœnician territory to the north-west in the neighbourhood of the great commercial city of Tyre. Mark relates the story in a very characteristic way, *not* telling us a great deal that we should like to know, as to what Jesus said to his disciples at this particular juncture, but giving us some graphic details and narrating a wonderful cure as the point of interest in the whole journey. In the account of the cure, there is a new feature, viz., that the patient was not present, and could not have been directly influenced by the authority of Jesus. But the 'little daughter' probably knew the purpose for which her mother was seeking Jesus, and this knowledge may have been a sufficient link of connection. She would *expect* something to happen and that expectation might well be sufficient to drive out 'the demon.' We have not enough particulars of the case to say more than this.

Far more important is the conversation which Jesus has with the mother. This bears directly upon the

¹ *First Three Gospels*, pp. 220, 287, 324.

great controversy of the Apostolic age and the labours of St. Paul, and was, therefore, rescued by Mark from oblivion. The Apostles found it much easier to make converts among the Gentiles than among the Jews; and when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, it was becoming increasingly evident that the Christian church would mainly be composed of Gentiles, and that Israel, as a people, rejected the offer first made to them, refusing to accept Jesus as the Christ. But Paul (*Rom.* i. 16; ii. 9, 10; xi. 17, 18) is emphatic in assigning a certain priority to the Jew, and he could not bring himself to believe that the rejection of Christ by the Jew, and therefore of the Jew by God, was final and irrevocable (*Rom.* ix.-xi.). It is one of the points of connection between St. Paul and Mark¹ that Mark alone gives us the words 'Let the children first be filled,' a saying which exactly expresses the Pauline attitude, whereas Matthew intensifies the exclusive claim of the Jews to the mission of Jesus, and Luke omits the whole incident.

In connection with the real life of Jesus the points of importance are, (1) Jesus did *not* go into the neighbourhood of Tyre in order to preach his gospel among the heathen, but in order to escape public notice. This, of itself, would make him unwilling to effect a cure which would bring on him the same popular pressure to work wonders that he had already found so prejudicial to his proper religious work in Galilee, and which would necessitate another flight. (2) Jesus is clearly conscious that his proper work lay among his own countrymen. He did not want to preach to the heathen; his own race were hungering

¹ See above pp. 3, 9, 13, 35, 48, 51, 52, 62, 68, 70, 74, 84.

for the bread of life which he knew he could give them: and he felt that to desert this work in order to preach to Gentiles, however ready they might be to receive his word, would be like taking the children's bread and giving it to the dogs. (3) Jesus is overcome by the mother's patient loving persistency and quick woman's wit. She turns his very argument round against himself, and does it with such humility and love that he can no longer refuse her. It is a new revelation to his own mind that 'the dogs,' or Gentiles, possessed such noble traits of character, and were so fit to be invited to enter the kingdom of God. He would have felt himself less loving than this poor mother had he continued to reject her request, however great the inconvenience of granting it. How this incident must have been remembered when the Apostles found themselves facing a similar difficulty on a larger scale! But the turning point was passed; Jesus had set them the example at this critical moment; the early Church followed where he led, and Christianity became a gospel for all the world.

It may be well to point out how the whole beauty and significance of the incident is lost by ascribing to Jesus superhuman knowledge and authority. It has been suggested that he acted as he did in order to try the woman's faith (which would have been a cruel experiment); or that, knowing her faith all the while, he acted thus in order to make an exhibition of it to his disciples. We really have an illustration of how God acts through His human children, controlling the destinies of mankind, but letting the crucial decisions

be made in a moment of impulse which knows little of consequences. Nevertheless the impulse is what it is, and the decision goes forth, in accordance with the character of those who feel and decide. The nature of Jesus was such, and the nature of this woman was such, that the whole incident happened as it did. Her motherly anxiety, his first speech, her reply, and his own new larger view of what he ought to do (and consequently, the later view adopted in his Church), all flow as the natural consequences of two human characters brought together in the way here described.

vii. 24. From thence, probably from Capernaum, or some place in Gennesaret, but the notes of place and time are not now as definite as in i.-vi. 45; and Sidon should probably be omitted, see ver. 31. Into a house, a different phrase from that in ii. 1; iii. 20; vii. 17, where his house, or headquarters, at Capernaum, is meant.

26. Syro-Phœnician. There were Phœnicians of Syria and Phœnicians of Lybia in North Africa. A Syro-Phœnician woman would not be a Greek in any strict sense, but probably she spoke the Greek language and accepted the Greek religion. The important fact is that she was a Gentile, and, at this time, that also meant a heathen.

27. The dogs. It was customary for the Jews to speak of the Gentiles as 'the dogs,' and the word certainly had an offensive meaning, which we can best understand by remembering how particular the Jews were as to what they eat, and how the dogs were, as they still are in the East, the scavengers of the streets. Comp. *Matt.* vii. 6, where the heathen are spoken of as dogs. But Jesus softens the expression by using a diminutive which might be translated 'little dogs,' or 'house dogs,' as opposed to street dogs, and it is his comparative courtesy in doing this which enables the woman to give her turn to the argument.

28. Crumbs. The Greeks after dinner would often wipe their fingers on the inside or crumb of a loaf, and then throw the bread to the dogs.

**§ 24. vii. 31-37. A journey further north
and back to Galilee.**

[*Matt. xv. 29-31.*]

It will be readily understood that Jesus, after complying with the woman's request, had immediately to leave the place in search of quiet. He continued his journey to the north, leaving the territory of Tyre and entering that of Sidon; then apparently passing over the Lebanon mountains by the great road which led from Sidon to Damascus, crossing the river Leontes by a natural bridge at El-Kuwe, then turning south, and finally reaching the Sea of Galilee again from the eastern side. As usual, Mark tells us of a wonderful cure, narrating it with his customary vividness, giving in Aramaic the very word used by Jesus, and letting us know how earnestly and how vainly Jesus endeavoured to avoid the notoriety of a wonder-worker.

vii. 31. Decapolis, the district of the Ten Cities, see v. 20.

32. An impediment. Dumbness, or imperfect speech, is frequently caused by deafness. We know too little of the details of the case to hazard a conjecture as to the nature of the cure. Spittle (ver. 33) was then regarded as a medical remedy. See viii. 23.

§ 25. viii. 1-10. **Feeding the Four Thousand.**¹

[*Matt.* xv. 32-39.]

This story is almost certainly a repetition of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Some of the details, such as the number of the multitude, and of the loaves and the baskets, are different, which caused Mark to think he had the account of a second occurrence; but the vague introduction, 'In those days' indicates that Mark is here finding a place for a story which has come to him not as part of the recollections of Peter, or of the direct apostolic tradition, but from some remoter and less trustworthy source. Verse 10 should perhaps belong to the next section.

1. **Again a great multitude**, no details are given of the place any more than of the occasion (see above, p. 73).

2. **Compassion**, a touch connecting the story with vi. 34, but there the pity of Jesus was awakened by the moral and religious helplessness of the people, not by their famishing condition.

10. **Dalmanutha**. A town at the northern end of the plain of Gennesaret, vi. 53.

§ 26. viii. 11-12. **Seeking a sign from Heaven.**

[*Matt.* xvi. 1-4a; xii. 38-39; *Luke* xi. 16, 29, 30.]

This short section is of great importance. It is considerably expanded in *Matthew*, who also repeats the substance of it in another passage. We also find it in *Luke*, but in a different connection and we are

¹ *First Three Gospels*, 209 sqq., 293. Comp. notes on vi. 30-44.

still some distance from the point (ix. 18) at which he joins in with the narrative common to all three Synoptics. Jesus has now returned to the western shore of the lake, he is surrounded by the most intense Jewish life and feeling; he again faces the religious leaders from whom he had for a while retired; and, immediately, he is confronted with a demand which brings about the great crisis in his ministry. The Pharisees ask him to show a sign from heaven which shall prove that he has a right to speak with the authority he claims, the right, *i.e.*, to speak for God as a prophet. This was a most natural demand on the part of the Pharisees, and they doubtless made it in perfect good faith. The mind of the religious Jew of this period was simply saturated with the conviction that their God would authenticate by signs and wonders any message which He had to send to His people. Read the account of the contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (*1 Kings* xviii. 20-46). Remember that Elijah was the typical Hebrew prophet, that the story of his struggle for the true faith furnished the mould into which ran all Jewish expectation of divine direction and assistance. The strength of this expectation is further indicated by the fact that Jesus never overcame, or even modified, in a single disciple, this belief that miracles are the credentials of true religion. It has remained the creed of his Church down to our times, down to the day where science has made it impossible for educated men to hold the old belief about miracles, and so has forced upon us the question, Can we have Christianity without miracles, or must

Christianity disappear along with the miracles? It is only now, in trying to answer that question, that men have discovered that Christ himself refused to make miracles a sign of the truth of his teaching. It speaks well for the faithfulness of the record in our Synoptic Gospels that we have this clear witness to the fact that Jesus now refused to give a sign. It is one of the most tragic situations in all history, and Mark faithfully preserves the solemn sadness of the hour, 'And he sighed deeply in his spirit.' Here was Jesus, prophet of God and son of God, sent to speak and live the word of God, sent to teach mankind that God is their Heavenly Father, that they all are brethren, and he was to be rejected and crucified because he could not show a sign from heaven! What, then, becomes of all the miracles which crowd the pages of the Gospel story? We have tried to rescue and to emphasise any foundation of fact which there may be in these tales of marvel, particularly in regard to the cures; but, for the rest, the main effect of the New Testament miracles is simply to show the incapacity of mankind to understand the nature of true religion, of spiritual influence, and the real relation between God and the world alike of matter and of mind. Yet Jesus understood and tried to teach this truth about religion.

§ 27. viii. 13-26. Across the lake to Bethsaida.

[*Matt.* xvi. 4b-12; *Luke* xii. 1.]

This demand for a sign rendered it impossible for Jesus to continue his former method of teaching and gradually winning adherents through pure spiritual influence. His countrymen felt they had a right to require such a sign from heaven, and would not listen to him unless he showed them one. So, once again, he leaves the scenes which had been the centre of his ministry, and retires to the country north of Galilee in order that he may consider the situation quietly and deliberately, and come to whatever conclusion God's holy Spirit should indicate as right. First, he and his disciples take again to their boat and travel to the north-east end of the lake, where they land near Bethsaida. No doubt, it was the hurry of their departure which caused the disciples to forget to secure any fresh supplies of bread. With their minds full of this negligence, they thought Jesus must be alluding to it when he bids them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod; and it is a profound disappointment to him to find his closest followers so incapable of entering into his own higher range of thought. We may doubt whether he alluded to the miracles of feeding precisely in the way here narrated, especially if only one event of the kind actually took place, and if that was different in real fact from the story preserved in our Gospels.¹

¹ See above pp. 73-5, 91. If the real fact was an organised sharing together, Jesus may have meant now that their wants would be cared for by a similar willingness to share with them among the inhabitants of the 'other side.'

But, by some such reference to whatever had really happened, Jesus may well have impressed upon them that he was not likely to be speaking only of their loaves when he began solemnly to address them, a solemnity indicated by the words, 'and he charged them, saying.' He had something far deeper in his mind which he wanted to convey to their minds, but which he found it most difficult to say to them, and which, judging from *Mark*, he did not now attempt to communicate after this disastrous beginning. Rightly understood, the story gives a pathetic illustration of the loneliness of Jesus, the difficulty he had to make himself understood, the difficulty he had in getting his most attached disciples even to try to understand him.

It may be asked why he used so many figurative expressions which were liable to be misunderstood. Let us remember that all language begins with a meaning confined to material objects, to their outward appearance and history. It was such things that men first wanted to talk about. When they began to talk about spiritual facts, facts of mind and the action of spiritual causation, they found no words ready-made with just the meaning they wanted to express. They were obliged to take words which had a material meaning, but which, by some analogy, some likeness capable of being felt when there was a sufficient effort of attention, could be made to convey the new spiritual meaning. We have a good illustration of this in the use of the word 'heart';¹

¹ See above p. 85. The word 'spirit,' first meaning 'wind,' is another good example.

and the Old Testament will afford many similar instances. The New Testament also is full of words which are there used, *for the first time*, in a new and higher meaning. This meaning may have become thoroughly familiar to us, but that is because we live eighteen centuries later.

We need not doubt what Jesus meant by this word 'leaven.' There is a parable in which he compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven. He means what we might now describe as personal influence, working actively but silently on the character, and so changing the disposition. There is at first, little outward evidence of what is taking place within the mind, but a change is going on under the influence of some remembered words or witnessed example; and presently, the result is manifest enough; and the change is either for good or for ill, according to the nature of the influence exerted. In the present instance, Jesus had left Capernaum because his teaching had brought him into serious opposition to the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees, and he did not wish to precipitate a conflict. Up to this time, so far as we can judge, the people generally were most friendly to him, only too eagerly seeking his assistance to cure their diseases. He returned after his journey beyond the borders of Galilee, and is immediately confronted by the demand of the Pharisees for a sign. We can hardly be wrong in supposing that it was supported by the whole of the people, by all 'this generation;' it was at that time a universal craving. Surely that was 'the leaven of the Pharisees' which had, in his absence, so rapidly and profoundly altered the general

feeling, that he immediately and finally leaves Capernaum. And when he begins to warn his boat-load of disciples against it, they think he is blaming them about bread! This leaven did influence the disciples, and has cast much of the Gospel story into its present form; but, behind the misconception, we can still read the thought of Jesus himself, and can profoundly sympathise with him in the greatness of his lonely task.

viii. 15. Herod, the ruler of Galilee, as in vi. 14-29; but this connection between the Pharisees and Herod refers us back to iii. 6. The two parties take counsel together how to destroy Jesus, and the result of their consultation is the demand for a sign. **Leaven**, Paul uses the same word in a very similar illustration, *1 Cor.* v. 6-8; *Gal.* v. 9.

17, 18. Men do not understand the analogies which convey new spiritual meanings without making a real mental effort and giving their closest and most persevering attention. This is what often makes 'listening to sermons' such hard work.

21. No, they did not understand, and it is only within our own days that disciples are beginning to understand.

22. Mark is the only writer who tells this story. *First Three Gospels*, p. 271. **Bethsaida**, the place mentioned in vi. 45. On the probability that the intervening passage is an addition to the original gospel, see above p. 77.

23. Another instance of the kindness of Jesus doing all the good in his power while making the usual endeavour to avoid notoriety, verse 26. **Spit on his eyes**, a second instance of the use of spittle as a medical remedy, see vii. 33. Tacitus, *Hist.* iv. 81, says, 'A certain man of the Alexandrian populace afflicted with wasted eyes, kept imploring the prince to deign to spatter saliva on his cheek and eyeballs.' See Clodd, *Myths and Dreams*, p. 16. Probably the patient was suffering from ophthalmia, a very common affliction in Palestine, and his intense hope and expectation that he might be cured would act beneficially, as we have already noticed. The details of the incident are peculiar, and it may be that we have here the fact

out of which various later traditions arose. The prophecy in *Is.* xxxv. 5, which was originally intended as figurative, would be understood literally of the Messiah; and in seeking to prove that Jesus was the Messiah the evangelists would collect, and tradition would enlarge, any accounts of how Jesus restored sight to the blind.

24. **As trees.** The man had not always been blind, for he knew what trees looked like. Probably he meant that he saw men swaying about unsteadily, but he knew that they were men because they walked.

§ 28. viii. 27-33. Thou art the Christ.

[*Matt.* xvi. 13-23; *Luke* ix. 18-22.]

We have now reached the culmination of the Galilean ministry of Jesus, and the critical turning point in his whole life, and in the history of the world so far as it has been influenced by his life and death. We have seen how Jesus began to preach the Gospel of God, the coming of His Kingdom, for which men were to prepare by repentance and righteousness. There was nothing in this which the strictest Jew could regard as heretical, but soon Jesus began to teach with the authority of one who felt himself a prophet of God, *i.e.*, a man commissioned by God to deliver a divine message to the world. True prophets have always come into collision with those who stand resolutely in the old ways and accept nothing new, and Jesus encountered one of the most intense and deadly forms of religious conservatism ever known. The religious Pharisee took counsel with the worldly Herodian how

they might destroy him. Meanwhile, the tone of authority assumed by Jesus had profoundly impressed the people generally, and impressed them because, with that large common-sense which often characterises the spiritual instinct of a multitude, they felt that it was rightful authority. Something in their own hearts responded to the declarations made by Jesus in the name of God. Undoubtedly, this impression on the people was greatly strengthened by the way in which Jesus cured disease, and especially by the influence which he exerted over demoniacs when he simply commanded them with this tone of authority. All this led the people to expect great things of Jesus; they were ready to follow him so soon as he proposed to lead them the way in which they wanted to go. They would have flocked to his standard in vast numbers, if he had put himself at the head of an armed revolt against the Romans. They would have redoubled the minuteness of their pharisaic zeal, if he had told them that this was the way to please God and secure Divine assistance. But neither of these things did Jesus do. He preached peace and righteousness, and required faith and love towards a Heavenly Father. Gradually his teaching became more and more opposed to what was usually heard in the synagogue. At this juncture, the Pharisees demand a sign, and the people all wait anxiously to see what proof Jesus will give of his right thus to oppose their traditional expectations and beliefs. Evidently, they did not consider his cures a sufficient sign from heaven; Jesus himself always tried to put them in the background; there were many others who healed diseases with greater or less degree

of success, and the nucleus of real fact was no doubt less imposing than the later forms which the stories subsequently assumed. It is most characteristic of the spiritual greatness of Jesus that he absolutely refused to make any attempt to give any such sign as was required. He knew, and probably he was the only man living on earth who did know, that this was *not* the way in which God gives credentials to His servants and vouches for the authenticity of their message. But though he was sure of what was not the divine way, he may well have hesitated before he could feel sure of what was best and right to do; and the more he thought it over, the more it all seemed to turn upon the answer to these questions; what did his countrymen think of him; whom did his disciples take him to be? He could lead those who were ready to follow; he could teach those who were willing to learn; what he had already done was evidence of this; what he could now do must depend on the effect produced by what he had done, and the extent to which it had made men ready to learn of him and accept his word as truth.

Cæsarea Philippi was an important town surrounded by a group of villages some thirty miles north of the Sea of Galilee, largely inhabited by Gentiles and beyond the reach of any independent Jewish authority. Here Jesus retired with a few disciples and asked them the momentous question 'Who do men say that I am.' The answer is that the people generally regard him as a prophet. Some have more definite views, and believe him to be John the Baptist, perhaps thinking that he had escaped from Herod's prison,

for John had been beheaded in prison, in the presence of no trustworthy witnesses, and the disciples might have been mistaken in thinking the headless corpse (vi. 29) was the real body of their master. Or the people may have believed, as Herod did (vi. 16), that John was risen from the dead. John had filled a large place in the popular imagination, far larger, as we learn from Josephus, than that filled during his life-time by Jesus; and the first thought of many on seeing or hearing about the crowd that thronged the steps of Jesus, was that this prophet must still be John the Baptist. Others said he was Elijah. Elijah was one of two or three men who had not been allowed to die,¹ but had been taken from earth to heaven to continue living there. And almost the last words of the Book of Malachi declared that God would send Elijah back to earth to prepare mankind for the great and terrible Day of the Lord.² Thus it became part of the accepted teaching of the Scribes that Elijah would be sent as the fore-runner of the great change which should inaugurate the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth; and the people, seeing that Jesus was doing this very work of preparation for the kingdom, and proclaiming it to be at hand, were saying he was really Elijah. But the popular belief, whatever form it took, vague or definite, had as its effect, to throw the people into an attitude of expectation. That was all. They did not think that anything important had happened, but that the time was close

¹ See *2 Kings* i-ii. Enoch was a second (*Gen.* v. 24); Moses a probable third, but the Scriptures nowhere stated this plainly.

² *Mal.* iv. 5, 6. *Comp.* p. 53.

at hand when it would happen. They fixed their eyes eagerly on Jesus, and looked to him for a sign.

Then Jesus asked his second question, still more momentous: 'But who say ye that I am?' It is the answer to this question that makes the turning-point in all religious history, and has given Peter a rightful primacy in the Christian Church. These disciples had lived maybe for many months in close personal association with Jesus. They failed indeed to apprehend the full scope of his spiritual work; but they did not fail to take in all that their hearts were large enough to hold. Jesus had won from them the very highest reverence which it was in their power to give to man. Peter is the spokesman of the others when he 'answereth and saith to him, Thou art the Christ.' This meant that Jesus was far more than a prophet sent to prepare for the coming kingdom; it meant that he was the man appointed by God to establish this kingdom on earth, and be its supreme earthly ruler.

Let us pause for a moment to distinguish in what sense Peter was wrong, and in what sense he was right, when he gave this answer. The Jews had been led to expect a Messiah, or Christ, of a certain type. Relying on ancient prophecies, they expected that he would inaugurate certain revolutionary changes, moral and religious as well as material and dynastic; and they anticipated that he would do this by the sudden exercise of supernatural power. Such a Messiah Jesus has never been. During the middle ages, when the Jews were cruelly persecuted by many unworthy Christians, a venerable Rabbi was once brought before a court

and interrogated as to why he so obstinately refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. In reply, he quoted the principal Messianic passages from the Psalms and Prophets, especially the eleventh chapter of *Isaiah*. 'These prophecies,' he said, 'have not been fulfilled; till they are, we cannot admit that the Christ is come.' Such a reply was really conclusive from his point of view, and clearly indicates why the Jews as a people never have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. The prophecies which he did fulfil are trifling compared with those which remained unfulfilled. And if, at Cæsarea Philippi, at the time when Peter said 'Thou art the Christ,' he could have been convinced that Jesus would never do the hundredth part of what he expected the Christ would do, he and the other disciples would have at once admitted that their master was not the Christ. With them, too, it was all expectation of what was going to take place, an expectation that has never been realised. In this sense Peter was wrong when he declared Jesus to be the Christ.

The sense in which Peter was right is simply that indicated by the subsequent history of the Christian Church. There were followers of Theudas and of Judas of Galilee¹ who thought these insurrectionary leaders were the Messiah, and they were wrong, wrong in a sense in which Peter was right. God has never sent the Messiah prophesied by *Isaiah*. He did send the man who became the founder of the Christian Church. All these eighteen centuries do not go for nothing. But we can maintain that Peter was

¹ *Acts* v. 36-37; comp. *xxi.* 38.

right only by accepting the complete transformation in the conception of the character and function of Christ which has been slowly produced during these centuries. Partly wrong and partly right, as Peter was, his conviction and avowal, taken up and carried on by successive generations of disciples, has made Jesus the Christ in this second sense. All these years, Jesus has had followers more ready to change their ideas concerning the character and function of the Christ, than to admit that this first acknowledgment of the transcendent personal influence of Jesus could have been an error.

This history of the Church, however, does not belong to the subject of the present volume, and what we are chiefly concerned to notice is that all later ideas of Christ, whether mediæval or modern, were entirely absent from the minds of Peter and his companions. Their minds were filled with the ordinary Jewish expectations of their day. This is the reason why Jesus forbade them to proclaim him publicly as the Christ. Mark's language here is significant. 'And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.' This is the language of a writer who not only believes Jesus to be the Christ, but believes that this fact was now acknowledged within the little circle of intimate disciples, a writer who wishes to imply, though he does not feel at liberty to state, that Jesus himself accepted the title and all which that title involved. But did Jesus do this; did he at this time believe that he was the Christ? This is one of the questions which modern criticism is unable to answer with any degree of cer-

tainty.¹ Perhaps the reason why we must doubt is that Jesus himself did not yet feel certain who he was, and that his main object in asking the questions he did was to help to clear and strengthen his own convictions. In this case he may well have felt that the question could be finally answered only by God, that the truth would be determined by his fate.

These four verses (viii. 27-30) read like the record of the very essence of an incident which fixed itself indelibly in the minds of all present. There is not a word which could be subtracted from their rapid, vivid narrative; we might linger much longer over the exposition of their contents. But we have hardly the same feeling about the next verse. How is it possible that the disciples could have been so utterly astounded and demoralised by the arrest of their master in Gethsemane, and so incredulous of his resurrection, if he had told them, in these very words, that he must 'be killed and after three days rise again'? Can we doubt that we have a case in which the knowledge of what did take place has influenced the composition of the narrative? There is no need to suppose that the verse is pure fiction. We have every reason to believe that Jesus, after forbidding his disciples to proclaim him as the Christ, began to tell them what were his own expectations in regard to his future fate, forebodings which were diametrically opposed to the joyful anticipations of the disciples. On several subsequent occasions, also, Jesus tried to warn and prepare them for what he felt was coming, but all

¹ See Martineau's *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 333-357 for a view strongly opposed to the usual Christology.

in vain; and on this first occasion, we have Peter, exulting in the avowal he has just made, now venturing, with true human inconsistency, to rebuke his Christ. The sharpness with which Jesus then turns and rebukes Peter, tells how Jesus felt the temptation. He did not wish to be rejected, to fail and die an early death, but he had brought himself to accept this fate, *if it was the will of God*; and Peter, telling him that this could not possibly be the divine will, perhaps accusing Jesus of want of faith in God in entertaining such an idea, was reinforcing the lower, not the higher, of the two influences that were contending within him, making it more difficult for him to commit himself unreservedly to God. Peter was therefore a Satan, an adversary, no friend, at that moment not even a disciple.

viii. 29. **The Christ.** On this title see note on i. 1. The reigning king of the Hebrew monarchy was often called 'Yahveh's Messiah,' or in Greek 'the LORD's Christ' (*e.g.* *1 Sam.* xvi. 6; xxiv. 6-10); and, what is much more remarkable, this title is given in *Is.* xlv. 1, to Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, who allowed the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem. But during the later centuries when there was no Jewish monarch, the title had come to signify the ideal King promised by Isaiah (xi. 1), though it was also applied to the Servant of Yahveh in his character of Teacher of the nations, *Is.* xlii. 1.

31. **Son of Man.** For a full inquiry into the meaning of this phrase see *First Three Gospels*, chap. vii. and Appendix, comp. also Martineau's *Seat of Authority*, p. 335 sq. There are three distinct meanings borne by the phrase in the Bible. (1) In *Ezekiel* ii. 1, and about ninety other passages in the same book, it is used by the prophet of himself, and may be taken therefore to signify the human agent through whom God speaks to the world, *i.e.* to mean simply a prophet. (2) In *Daniel* vii. 13

it means the Messianic kingdom typified by the human form as opposed to the worldly kingdoms which are typified by the forms of beasts. (3) In the Apostolic Age, it meant the Messiah, and whenever it signifies Jesus, *i.e.* throughout the New Testament, the disciples of that age, and of all later times, would understand it in that meaning. The questions difficult to answer are (a) Did Jesus himself use the phrase? and (b) If he did so, in which of the above three senses did he use it? It is clear that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah in the earlier portion of his ministry; even now, he forbids his disciples to give him the title, so that if he spoke of himself as Son of Man in *Mark* ii. 10, it must have been in the first sense, *viz.* of a prophet, and must have been so understood by the people whom he addressed, who certainly did not then regard Jesus as claiming to be the Christ. It is used in other passages, viii. 31; ix. 9, 12, 31; x. 33, 34, where Jesus is referring to his future suffering, death, and resurrection; there too the sense of prophet is appropriate. But there are other passages, xiii. 26, xiv. 62, where the phrase might well bear the second meaning, *viz.*, an impersonal designation of the coming kingdom of God; and this raises the question whether this is not in all probability the sense in which Jesus really used the phrase, and whether its application to himself in the sense of the Messiah, the third meaning, did not grow up in the Apostolic age. The evangelists could not make Jesus speak of himself as the Christ, but they could make him speak of himself as the Son of Man precisely because of the vague meaning of the phrase.

Three days, a proverbial expression for a short space of time, rather than an accurate limit. See *Hosea* vi. 2.

33. Satan, see notes on i. 13, iii. 23. Mindest, in the sense of caring, wishing for, and so thinking about, a good old use of the verb to 'mind'; we find the same sense in *Rom.* viii. 5; xii. 16; *Phil.* iii. 15, 19. From this it passes to the meaning of 'making up one's mind,' resolving on some course of action, or, as it is expressed both in the Old and New Testament, 'being minded to do' something; *Ruth* i. 18; *Ezra* vii. 13; *Matt.* i. 19; *2 Cor.* i. 15.

33. **Turning about.** Mark's graphic description, resting doubtless on a recollection which Peter could never forget and was too honourable to conceal, enables us to re-construct a complete picture of the occurrence. Jesus, after speaking 'openly' the words summarised in verse 31, turns away from his disappointed and unsympathising disciples; they consult together; Peter comes forward as spokesman, they all closely following, so that Jesus, 'turning about,' sees them all together, enlisted on the wrong side, minding the things of men, and making it yet more difficult for him to mind the things of God.

§ 29. viii. 34-ix. 1. The King's Highway of the Holy Cross.¹

[*Matt.* xvi. 24-28; *Luke* ix. 23-27.]

The sequel of the last section is of a very different character. It is full of the truest and most intense Christian thought; it is thrilled through and through with the spirit of the real Jesus. But it is this spirit as it lived again in the disciples of the Apostolic age, when they began with fervid zeal to take up and carry on the work which Jesus left for them to do, and when they had the feeling so powerfully expressed by Paul, but present also in the hearts of earnest disciples of all lands and times, 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me' (*Gal.* ii. 20). If we did not understand that this is the character of the section, we should indeed be puzzled to know who were the multitude whom Jesus called unto him with his disciples. He had retired to the neighbourhood of

¹ See *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II., chap. xii.; *First Three Gospels*, p. 227 sq., 386 sq.

Cæsarea Philippi on purpose to escape the crowd, and to be alone with his own chosen followers, and the conversation which he had with them there, with its all-decisive consequences, was to be kept for the present a profound secret from the world. But any words of warning which Jesus now spoke to his few disciples, extending to them a share in the sufferings he anticipated for himself (ver. 31), had in the Apostolic age a far wider application to the general body of believers, who heard the preaching of the word, who were converted and baptised, but who needed more than this to make them true followers of Christ. To them this whole discourse emphatically applies. It describes what the first disciples were doing and had done, and what every later disciple would have to do and must be prepared to do. And it speaks of the last days (verses 38, ix. 1) in language which is intensely characteristic of the thought of the Apostolic age. But if any doubt remained respecting the later date of the composition of this discourse, it would be removed by the use of the word 'cross.' It is here used as the symbol of self-sacrifice. It was never so used before the crucifixion of Jesus himself. He, and no one else, transfigured the cross from shame to glory. It had represented nothing but a cruel and ignominious form of death, generally reserved for criminal slaves and rebels, and inflicted chiefly by the Romans,¹ who regarded a painless death as a way of escaping

¹ When the Roman General Varus put down the revolt which broke out in Palestine after the death of Herod the Great, B.C. 4, he crucified two thousand Jews. *Life in Palestine*, p. 74; *Jos. Ant.* xxvii. 10, 10. Herod, cruel tyrant as he was, never resorted to crucifixion as a punishment.

punishment. It was by his example, not in mere words, that Jesus said unto all, 'If any man would 'come after me, let him deny himself, and take up 'his cross daily, and follow me.' It is, of course, possible that 'to take up the cross' was at this time a proverbial expression, like the phrase, 'to drink the cup.' But there is no evidence that this was the case. All we can say is that if Jesus determined on taking such a line of action as might lead to his being treated as a rebel by the Roman authorities, he would know that he would risk the punishment of crucifixion. Obviously, too, it is through the writings of St. Paul that the bold imagery of the cross passed into the common language of Christian duty. When he wrote, *Gal.* ii. 20, 'I have been crucified with Christ,' and in other passages made the message of the cross the very heart of his gospel (*Gal.* v. 11, vi. 12, 14; *1 Cor.* i. 23), he taught every disciple to feel that he, too, must share this cross, and that this must be done in some way which involved the killing of an old self and the rising to a new life. To 'deny oneself' originally meant more than it is usually taken to mean now, something more than the giving up of a few pleasures or forms of self-indulgence. It meant, and it should still mean, the complete victory of the higher side of human nature over the lower. It has no meaning at all unless we understand that there are these two sides in human nature; but when this is understood, we have discovered the secret of saving life by losing it, and of losing the life that we are eager to save. The simplest example of this concerns the pursuit of happiness. Those who consciously seek to make

themselves happy, seldom are happy, never for long.¹ Happiness comes to us when we are seeking something else, and then it often happens that the pursuit gives us more pleasure even than the attainment. And the same is true of all aims and ambitions that seek self-satisfaction and self-glorification. They end in disappointment, and the feeling that life has been thrown away, lost in their pursuit. Those who feel that they have truly lived, those who can look back upon a career, and say, in the words of Harriet Martineau, 'I have had a noble share of existence,' are the men and women who have worked hard for some object outside their own selfish interests, and have won a reward they did not seek in the gratitude of men, or in the still higher happiness which comes when God says to them, 'Well done,' and bids them share His joy in doing good.²

We need not doubt that Jesus felt sure that the cause of righteousness was safe in the hands of his Heavenly Father. In the near future, indeed, he anticipated disaster for himself and suffering for his followers, but it would be perfectly natural for him to believe, and to encourage them to believe, that the triumph of good over evil was only delayed, and that before very long something corresponding to the promises of ancient prophecy and their own eager desires would come to pass. In verse 38, the spirit of the real Jesus is not easily recognised. The words express the belief, intensely characteristic of the Apos-

¹ Comp. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 132-149, especially p. 142.

² For this secret of Jesus comp. Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 128 sq. pop. ed.

toloc age, that Jesus would return to earth in power and great glory, and would then fulfil every hallowed Jewish expectation, and reward every faithful disciple. This belief glows in the earliest of the New Testament writings, the first extant letter of St. Paul, *1 Thess.* iv. 15-17; it influences the tone of every intervening book, and is still prominent in *2 Peter*, the last work which, with some difficulty, found entrance into the canon. It was the faith in this triumphant return of their Master, which enabled the disciples to trust and to work as they did. On this expectation they founded the Christian Church. And Jesus himself may well have largely shared it with them, and spoken words which helped to revive their faith after the crushing blow of the crucifixion. At any rate, there is strong reason for regarding verse ix. 1, as a genuine utterance of his own. The case here is the converse of that of verse 31. There, we had reason to think, a knowledge of what had actually taken place caused words to be ascribed to Jesus which it is not likely he ever uttered, at any rate, so definitely. Here, the fact that what was expected never did take place compels us to assign some other reason for the record of the prophecy, and what reason so likely as that Jesus himself really expected, and led his followers to expect, some speedy manifestation of divine power which should bring the kingdom of God from heaven to earth? We may be the more inclined to accept the genuineness of this recorded saying, because in *Mark* (as distinguished from the later *Matthew*) Jesus speaks only of *the coming of the kingdom of God*, leaving his own share in the triumph unnoticed. These words may, or may

not, have been spoken at this particular crisis, but it is a real addition to our knowledge of the state of mind of Jesus if we can take them as proof that he did firmly believe in the speedy coming with power of the kingdom of God.

35. And the Gospel's. These words, peculiar to Mark, perhaps indicate Pauline influence. The word translated 'soul' (margin, R.V.) means almost exactly the same as 'life,' which is really the best English translation. It is the principle of life, distinct from the body, which existed for a time after death, and distinct also from what the New Testament writers call the 'spirit,' which is more like what we now mean when we speak of an immortal soul, and which they regarded as a direct emanation from the divine spirit of the Heavenly Father. They made a triple distinction into body, soul, and spirit, where we think it more accurate to make a two-fold distinction between body, and soul or spirit.

36. Gain the whole world, enjoy every possible pleasure.

37. Comp. Ps. xlix. 7, 8. There is no price by which death can be bought off when a man's time is come. The common buying and selling of slaves suggested the thought.

38. Adulterous and sinful generation. A phrase founded on the old prophetic language, in which religious unfaithfulness (or idolatry) was described as the violation of wedded purity by Yahveh's spouse, the people of Israel. The words are only found in *Mark*, and are introduced to heighten the shame of denying Christ before such worthless men.

The holy angels. Legions of angels were believed to be engaged in carrying out the divine will, just as Satan had legions of the demons so often mentioned.

ix. 1. For further treatment of this verse see *First Three Gospels*, pp. 228, 230, 256, 386.

§ 30. ix. 2-8. **The Transfiguration.**

[*Matt.* xvii. 1-8, *Luke* ix. 28-36.]

The story of the Transfiguration may be regarded as the climax of the narratives which cluster round the Galilean ministry. Nowhere else do we meet with such sublime supernaturalism; and if, for a while, we can sink our western matter-of-fact way of regarding truth, we may well be content for the time being simply to absorb the spiritual thought of this great eastern allegory. All attempts to rationalise the story are miserable failures, giving us nothing but guesses for which there is not a particle of evidence, and destroying all worth, as dissection destroys a flower's beauty. Hardly more satisfactory are all attempts to realise the occurrence in imagination, for it is essentially something that imagination cannot realise, and even the genius of Raphael's great picture only serves to impress upon us the fact that there are truths which the eye cannot see, which none of our senses can apprehend, but which, nevertheless, are a revelation to the spirit.

It has frequently been suggested that the story may have originated in a dream, but even if this were so, it would explain nothing; the really important question would be, how came such a dream to be dreamed? The answer to this and similar questions is that whatever may have been its origin, something of this kind was wanted to express the feeling of the disciples, when, after the scene at Caesarea Philippi, they knew they might regard their master as the Christ. They

had known him as the son of a village carpenter; they had known him as a young Rabbi, a Teacher or Master, one of those who stood up to read in the synagogue and expound the Law and the Prophets; they had known the series of events, the wonderful cures and the wonderful words, which caused men more and more to regard him as a Prophet; and they themselves had taken the final step and hailed him as the Christ. It is difficult for us to realise all that this final step then meant. It meant that Jesus stood on a level of equality with Moses and Elijah, with the founder of Judaism and the Prophet whom the chariot of fire had taken up to God. It is no difficulty to us to think of Jesus as on a level with, or as far superior to, Moses and Elijah. But when such a thought first took full possession of the disciples' minds, it meant a true transfiguration of Jesus.

Suppose that there appeared among the Mohammedans of the present day a prophet who claimed to be, not so much a follower, as an equal of Mohammed, assuming authority to revise the Koran, prohibiting for instance, polygamy or slavery, or declaring the whole sensual Paradise promised to true believers a mistaken expectation; suppose that such a Teacher won a following who believed him justified in his pretensions, and urged him to assert them boldly, and trust to supernatural support for their vindication; in such a case we might have something of a modern parallel to what took place among the mountains north of Galilee. The parallelism fails in several important respects, for though Mohammedans have been taught to look for the coming of a new prophet, or Mahdi, and many of

the Arab tribes still hope for his appearance, this expectation has never acquired the clearness, or the moral intensity of the messianic faith among the Jews, and there is consequently the less chance of any successful attempt to realise it.

In the case of Jesus, we noticed how soon he began speaking in a tone of authority independent of past legislation and tradition, how this tone of authority specially influenced those afflicted with mental disease and supposed to be possessed by evil spirits, and how this same authority—essentially a conviction that he was uttering a message given him direct by God—was still more strongly marked when he encountered the deliberate and deadly opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, *i.e.*, of the established leaders of the religion which relied on Moses and Elijah. Jesus, therefore, was forced by the logic of the situation to consider whether he was or was not equal in authority, in a divine commission to declare the will of God, with the very founders of Judaism. Unless he felt this equality, he had no alternative but to confess his mistake, and sit down at the feet of older and more orthodox Rabbis. Similar was the position of his disciples; they must either cease to trust his teaching, or regard him as the long promised Christ. We know which alternative was taken, but it requires all the effort we can make to think ourselves back among the conditions of those times in order to realise this transfiguration by which the carpenter's son became the Christ.

If we are right in our interpretation of the essential meaning of the story, we may venture another step in explaining the words of Peter, and the voice out of the

cloud. The real meaning of this, and possibly the original connection, seem to have been lost even before this Gospel was written; for the writer, not understanding Peter's answer, tells us that Peter 'wist (*i.e.*, knew) not what to answer,' and, moreover, gives us no hint of any communication addressed to Peter which he had to answer. But the history of the early Church supplies all the explanation needed to make this fragment of discourse perfectly intelligible, and shows what would have been the meaning in the minds of those who first heard the story, and possibly in the mind of him who first conceived it. After the death of Jesus, a large part of his followers, especially those who were Jews by birth and training, wished to remain Jews as well as to become Christians, wished to make three Tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, and felt it good for the whole Church to remain there, reverencing the higher morality of Jesus, but none the less reverencing the traditional authority of Moses, and that conception of miraculous support from heaven connected with the whole history of Elijah. It was the life work of St. Paul to set Christianity free from this narrow limitation, which made the disciples no more than a sect among the Jews, and required every convert to become a Jew before he could become a Christian; and St. Paul did his work by preaching Jesus Christ as the Son of God, greater than even the greatest of those who had been prophets of God. Now, Paul's conviction rested not on any human intercourse with Jesus, but direct on a revelation made within him, on a voice which he heard out of heaven, a voice which he heard saying, 'This is my

beloved Son: hear ye *him*.' This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ so fervently preached by St. Paul. There were many ways in which the Christ could be regarded; the success of St. Paul's preaching fixed the essential belief of the Church around this faith in the Christ as Son of God; and then, as we know well, the Church further continued this process of glorification. While St. Paul had spoken of Christ as the first born of many brethren (*Rom.* viii. 29), the Church soon spoke of him as the only begotten Son; while Paul had said 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are Sons of God' (*Rom.* viii. 14), the Church soon came to regard him as essentially different from every other child who calls God, Father. And finally, when the Church had thus settled that the Christ did not belong to the class of beings known as men, then, rather than regard him as a second and inferior Deity to God the Father, an idea essentially heathenish, St. Athanasius secured the adoption of the Nicene formula, and the mystery of the Incarnation became the corner stone of Church dogma. We cannot here trace out the steps of this development, but we may note that these are the stages of the transfiguration by which the Carpenter's Son became the Second Person in the Trinity.

2. **After six days.** This is usually supposed to mean six days after the confession of Peter, and it is possible that Jesus may have made some expedition with his three most intimate disciples at this time, associating them with his practice of retiring to lonely spots, especially by night, for prayer to God. But such a possible expedition is of little consequence, and would not of itself have accounted for any of the essential features in the story which follows.

The same may be said of all the other suggestions which the older Rationalism was fond of offering, such as the wonderful effects of moonlight, especially on men just awakened out of sleep (*Luke ix. 32*); the possibility that Jesus had made an appointment with two shepherds, or had chanced to meet two acquaintances on the mountain, and the still more hackneyed mistake of a peal of thunder for a voice. We have no evidence for any of these suppositions; and, if correct, they explain next to nothing. If we accept some such explanation as that already given, we shall feel the need of none of these fanciful suggestions; if we cannot accept it, we shall find no rationalistic explanation satisfactory. The expression **transfigured** probably comes from *2 Cor. iii. 18*, where the Greek verb is the same. Compare the thought in verses 8-11 as an expression of Paul's conviction that Christ was greater than Moses.

3. **Glistening**, *i.e.*, showing lustre as well as colour. Mark alone supplies this touch, and refers to the fuller's work of whitening cloth, which may have been suggested by *Mal. iii. 2*. Other Old Testament references to the occupation occur, *2 Kings xviii. 17*; *Is. vii. 3*; *xxxvi. 2*.

4. In Raphael's picture the figures are soaring above the earth, which is certainly not suggested here. There is a famous picture by Fra Angelico in the Convent of St. Mark at Florence, which better represents the writer's thought.

5. **Tabernacles**, booths or arbours made of branches of trees with thick leaves, such as were constructed for temporary use during the Feast of Tabernacles, a sort of summer camp-meeting. See *Lev. xxiii. 34*; *Deut. xvi. 16*; *xxxi. 10*; *2 Chron. viii. 13*. Comp. also, for a thought closer to that of Peter, *Is. iv. 5, 6*.

7. **The cloud**. We frequently meet with the belief that God concealed His presence in a cloud. Originally it is part of the nature-worship which would make a thunderstorm among mountains particularly impressive, comp. *Ps. xviii. Exod. xxiv. 18* and *xxxiii. 9-11*, afford other examples. The words heard out of the cloud may have been suggested by the familiar thought in *Ps. ii. 7*, *Is. xlii. 1*, and *Deut. xviii. 15*.

§ 31. ix. 9-13. The Conversation during the Descent from the Mount.

[*Matt.* xvii. 9-13; *Luke* ix. 36, 37.]

We have already met with the belief about Elijah founded on *Mal.* iv. 5, 6; the disciples had to satisfy the requirements of that belief in some way; and doubtless Jesus had to find some explanation that would satisfy his own mind. Verse 12 is obscure, but it suggests that Jesus may have regarded his own ministry, respecting which he had now very sad forebodings, as the Elijah preparation promised by Malachi. It is, at any rate, noteworthy that Mark does not identify John the Baptist with Elijah as the later Gospel of Matthew does; and certainly Jesus would not, any more than his disciples, regard a short ministry ending with apparent failure and death as the coming of the Christ, or as anything more than a preparation for the real coming of the Son of Man. There may also be here a reference to the 'suffering servant of the Lord' described in *Is.* liii. This passage did not harmonize with the popular Jewish expectations of Messianic power and glory, though the Targum (lii. 13), admitted to represent an ancient tradition, begins 'Behold my servant Messiah.' Probably, therefore, this application was pre-Christian, though but little noticed. But the early Church at once seized upon the passage as a marvellously true picture of its new conception of a Christ who must first suffer before he entered into his glory. Then, again, we may ask the question, so difficult to answer, did Jesus himself apply this pro-

phesy to his own case? He certainly anticipated suffering, and suffering for the sake of others, and it may have been words of his own which directed the disciples' attention to the wonderful description in *Isaiah*. It will seem very tiresome to the young student to meet only with doubtful answers to interesting questions; but it is of the utmost importance to distinguish between two classes of religious ideas, (1) those which we can with confidence ascribe to Jesus just because he stands out a unique figure amid his contemporaries, with thoughts that they could not understand and aspirations which they could not share, and (2) those which we never can connect so certainly with the real Jesus simply for the reason that they did largely enter into the minds of his contemporaries. In the present case, in considering how far we may go in ascribing to Jesus himself a prevision of what was to be his fate and future, there is a limiting fact in the agony of Gethsemane. Just as the faithless flight of the disciples shows how little they were really prepared for the actual providence of God, so the prayer of Jesus that the cup might pass must be the prayer of a man who did *not* know, more than other men, that this ruin of all his hopes was the way by which the Kingdom of God should be brought down from heaven to earth. We shall recur to this subject again later, but it is well to be warned in good time against letting any fancied fore-knowledge on the part of Jesus rob us of our power to appreciate the true greatness of his faith and courage.

9. **Tell no man.** This injunction reads like a way of admitting that the whole story was never heard of at the time,

and modern critics take it as an indication that the entire conception dates from the Apostolic Age. *First Three Gospels*, 229, 384.

10. All the Pharisees believed in a rising again from the dead (comp. *Acts* xxiii. 6-8); but it was only expected in a more or less distant future, and it was uncertain whether it would affect all, or only some, of the departed. What was exceptional in the case of Jesus was the belief of the disciples that without waiting for any such general resurrection God immediately raised up Jesus, and not only brought him back again to life, but further raised him to the right hand of the Throne in heaven. All these and kindred points would be much discussed in the early Church, and there is no reason why we should not think of some of them as having been talked over before the death of Jesus, provided we clearly understand that all was then so indefinite, that the arrest and crucifixion came upon the disciples as a crushing disaster, and that the story of his resurrection first seemed to them an idle tale.

12. *Is it written.* It was written, *Is.* liii., that the Servant of the LORD should suffer many things; this Servant was identified with the Messiah by the early Christians, and in speaking of the Messiah they used the phrase Son of Man. There is no evidence that the passage in *Isaiah* was ever supposed to be descriptive of the preparation to be effected by Elijah, as might be supposed from verse 13. Comp. viii. 28.

§ 32. ix. 14-29. The Epileptic Boy.

[*Matt.* xvii. 14-21; *Luke* ix. 37-43.]

After the account of the Transfiguration, the narrative goes on to relate a most interesting cure of an epileptic boy, giving us particulars of the case, or what the doctors call its diagnosis, with a fulness that we generally seek in vain. This whole story stands

out like the vivid recollection of an eye-witness, and is thoroughly intelligible from beginning to end; indeed, it affords quite the best picture we have of how Jesus effected a cure which the crowd would consider miraculous (exactly as an Arab crowd would regard a similar cure to-day), but which we know now to be perfectly natural. Our only difficulty will be in understanding why it should be supposed that there was anything wonderful in what took place. What is described is the normal course of an epileptic fit, when the patient falls without warning to the ground, is grievously convulsed, grinds his teeth and often cuts his tongue, foams at the mouth, then is utterly exhausted, and yet, an hour after, may be walking about again apparently little the worse for the terrible attack. But in the worst cases, there may be a succession of fits, and a subsequent exhaustion so great as to resemble death; and Jesus seems to have arrived on the scene during such a succession of attacks which the disciples had in vain endeavoured to check; he seems also to have waited till the final stage of exhaustion was reached, and then to have raised the boy up out of his stupor. This would be quite enough to account for the impression made on the minds of the disciples and of the crowd, while it would also be the most sensible course of treatment. There is nothing to be done while the fit is in progress beyond loosening the garments, giving fresh air, and restraining the patient from injuring himself. It would indeed have been a wonderful cure if this boy, who had been liable to these attacks from childhood, never had

another. But this we are not told. For the time being, at any rate, he recovered, and then the Gospel narrative passes on to other scenes and we hear no more of his subsequent fate.

While the story thus bears every mark of a well-preserved reminiscence, we can by no means feel the same confidence that it is inserted in its right place in the narrative. There is not only the difficulty of the 'multitude' in the locality where Jesus had gone for privacy; there is also the presence of 'Scribes' among them, verse 14, showing that it was not a mere crowd of the Gentile inhabitants of the neighbourhood; in fact, it is the usual multitude that we meet with in Galilee. Then in verse 28, they come into 'the house' which means the house which was their headquarters at Capernaum, as in ii. 1; but it is not till ix. 30 that they leave the district of Cæsarea Philippi, and, passing through Galilee, come, verse 33, to Capernaum, where we find them in *the* house as distinct from *a* house, vii. 24. It seems, therefore, that the account of an incident which occurred near Capernaum has been transferred to the time when Jesus had just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration.

After the death of Jesus, the disciples must often have had occasion to deplore their inability to work all the wonders that were demanded of them; they would feel that they could only pray for divine help; some, less true to their Master's spirit, would add fasting to prayer as a means of extorting a boon from heaven; and so the recollection of this cure would become associated in their minds with the

time when Jesus first made them contemplate the possibility of having to act without his constant presence, and the story would then find its place in its existing connection.

Another interesting feature in the account is preserved in the father's cry, 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' This is one of the paradoxes which express the deepest spiritual truths. The thought is worked out in Wreford's well-known hymn, 'Lord! I believe; thy power I own,' but it will be best explained by the experience of every one who has tried to walk by faith, endeavouring always to trust to the highest and noblest impulses, always to be guided by the conscience which tells what is best, and therefore, what is right, always to have faith that God will give us strength to do whatever it is His will that we should do. Even the most earnest lives, as biography constantly shows, are not exempt from the quick fluctuation between the feeling 'I believe' and the consciousness of not having a faith sufficiently strong for action, a faith which will not only be submissive but triumphant.

15. Amazed. We are not told why the multitude were so astonished; it is usually suggested that it was because Jesus still retained about his person some of the glory of transfiguration; but this is mere conjecture, and there is no further allusion to any lingering of the glistening garments or (*Matt.* xvii. 2) face shining as the sun.

17. Teacher, the usual mode of address, cp. iv. 38, v. 35; ix. 38; x. 17, 20, 35; xii. 14, 19, 32; xiii. 1; xiv. 14.

19. Faithless generation. Jesus wanted his disciples to exercise similar powers to his own, and believed that with

sufficient faith they might do so, and be prepared for the time when he would no longer be with them.

22. The attack comes on without the slightest warning, so that the patient may fall into the fire or any dangerous place, and for some time be utterly unable to move.

25. Deaf and dumb spirit. Those who were deaf were considered particularly hard to heal, as they could not hear any words of command or persuasion addressed to 'the spirit' supposed to possess them. But the boy does not seem to have been permanently dumb, only so during the fit, verses 17, 18.

29. We have already seen that there is 'nothing to be done' till the fit is over: any of the usual Jewish methods of exorcism would only aggravate the attack; this is the scientific side of the fact of which Jesus here expresses the religious side. This answer of his would be remembered in after days when prayer was regarded as the principal remedy for disease, *James* v. 14-18; and the 'many ancient authorities' who add 'and fasting' (margin R.V.), show us how the practice of fasting among some of the early Christians could influence the report of what Jesus had said. *First Three Gospels*, pp. 69, 356.

§ 33. ix. 30-50. Last Words in Galilee.¹

[*Matt.* xvii. 22-25, xviii. 1-9, xxiii. 11, x. 40, 42, v. 13, *Luke* ix. 43-50, xxii. 26, xvii. 1, 2, xiv. 34.]

We now approach the conclusion of the Galilean ministry of Jesus and find a renewal of the warning already given concerning his death and resurrection. We have also the statement that the disciples 'understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him.' This indicates that whatever anticipations Jesus uttered at this

¹ Comp. *First Three Gospels*, 225 sq. 384.

time were expressed with a vagueness which rendered them liable to be misunderstood. What Jesus wanted to bring home to their minds was his conviction that he was called upon to undertake a most dangerous duty, and that he must be allowed to proceed in his own way. He did not want the people generally to know what he was about to do, or even to know where he was, for all their desire would be to force him into a position which he was resolved not to take, and which would be fatal to what we may henceforth regard as his great resolve. While he forbade any open proclamation of his claim to be the Christ, there was a course which he determined to pursue, and which from this time forth he did pursue with a steady purpose, until it led him to the end which he had foreseen as its probable result. We are not told in so many words what this resolution was, but we may infer it from the subsequent events. The Pass-over was near at hand, the Spring Festival which would gather together at Jerusalem more than two million Jews from all parts of Palestine and many distant lands. It was their great national Assembly; they had, of course, no representative government, and this vast meeting at the capital was the nearest approach to a body entitled to speak and decide for the whole people. Jesus resolved not only to attend this feast, but to go to it as a prophet of God. He would deliver at the capital the same message about the Kingdom of God which he had been preaching in Galilee, which had won him the general repute of a prophet, and led his nearest disciples to hail him as the Christ, but which the priests and scribes

opposed with a bitterness that sought his very life. At the Passover at Jerusalem, he would appeal to the nation to judge between their established rulers and himself, and in so doing, he would appeal to God to declare His righteous Will.

But while Jesus resolved on making this appeal, he had too much insight to do so without the serious forebodings which find their place in the Gospels. Herein lies the difference between faith and fanaticism. Had Jesus been a fanatic, he would have gone forward with exultant joy, confident that God was with him and would support his claims. It is the perfection of faith to do that which is felt to be the will of God, regardless of all else, believing that it will lead to disaster, but confident that God's will shall triumph in the end.

The remainder of the chapter is taken up with the record of instruction and counsel that Jesus now gave to the chosen twelve. The important historical fact is that he now devotes himself to the teaching of this inner circle; there is no more public preaching in Galilee. The address ascribed to him may not all have been delivered on one occasion; if it were, it is completely interrupted by John's remark in verse 38; more likely we have the familiar assemblage of recollections that have some loose connection one with another, and it is useless to seek for any clear or important sequence of thought running through the whole.¹ The subjects dealt with are these: (a) The dispute as to who was the greatest, 33-35. As they had disputed 'one with another,' we may assume that

¹ Comp. the parallels in *Matt.* and *Lk.* widely scattered and in other connections.

they were not considering an abstract proposition, but discussing, as Luke puts it (ix. 46), which of themselves should be greatest in the coming kingdom. The same question prompted the petition of James and John, x. 35-45, and may well have been the subject of frequent debate. And it is the same principle which Jesus endeavours to explain there and here, the great true principle of service. Those who desire the first place must earn it by making themselves useful; he who is servant, or minister, of all, though he be last and lowest of all in the estimation of the world, really holds the first rank in the kingdom of God, and this is the only way to win that rank.

(b) A word about little children, verses 36-37. This subject also reappears later on, x. 13-16; so that it is quite possible that we have two accounts of what was really one event. In any case, the tone of the present passage seems to have been influenced by the facts of the early Christian missions. It is now impossible to say how far Jesus tried to prepare his disciples to carry on his work in his name after he was gone. The account is written by one who is well acquainted with the work done by St. Paul and other preachers of the Apostolic age, and who is familiar with Pauline language. It embodies a doubtless genuine recollection of the interest Jesus felt and showed in little children, and of his identification of their interests with himself, the feeling elsewhere expressed (*Matt.* xxv. 35-45) 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.' It also embodies a thought which is the kernel of many a passage in the Fourth

Gospel, viz., that Jesus is the Christ, because he is sent by God, and owes his entire importance to the fact of his being thus sent to do the will of another, viz., God Himself.

(c) John's interruption, verses 38-41. Probably this describes an incident which actually occurred; at least there is no improbability in it; but its insertion here is doubtless due to a wish to show what Jesus would have said with regard to the whole work of St. Paul. He was one who did a mighty work in the name of Jesus Christ, but he had never followed the master with the older Apostles, and had a most serious controversy with them about the way in which this work should be carried on. They were ready enough to forbid him preach the Gospel when he opposed their views, and it was only the manifest blessing which that preaching received that enabled Paul to maintain his position as an Apostle.

(d) After this interruption the discourse reverts to the little children, verse 42, and the possibility of causing them to stumble. Almost all sin causes others also to be tempted to sin, and when we think of innocent children, and the whiteness of their souls being polluted with human greed, insincerity, or licentiousness, we can best understand the deep moral indignation which underlies the words of Jesus.

(e) Connected with the word 'stumble' comes the thought how men are themselves caused to stumble by the powers and capacities which ought to be the means for serving and glorifying God, but which may become the slaves of sin. The necessity is expressed in the strongest terms, verse 43, sqq., that there must

be 'war to the knife' with all that hinders complete self-surrender to the divine will. The thought is intensely characteristic of the real teaching of Jesus, but the language is figurative. Self-mutilation, in any form, cannot really help anyone to be good, and Jesus nowhere shows any sympathy with the principle or practices of asceticism, even in a much milder form. Equally figurative is the reference to hell, *i.e.*, Gehenna, with its unquenchable fire and undying worm. This is the only passage in which this word Gehenna occurs in *Mark*; and we must be careful not to put into it all the meaning which was gradually acquired by the mediæval word, Hell. Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, was a rocky valley immediately to the south of Jerusalem. Here, in the reigns of kings Ahaz and Manasseh, and probably at other times as well, children had been sacrificed to the heathen God, Molech, 'made to pass through the fire to Molech,' as we read in *Lev. xviii. 21, 2 Kings xxiii. 10*. The legal practice of this cruel idolatry was suppressed in king Josiah's reformation, but the remembrance of its horrors was vivid enough when the prophet Jeremiah (vii. 30-33, comp. xix. 11-13) denounced it. After the return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the Jews required some place in which to burn the refuse of the city, and no place seemed so suitable as this valley of Hinnom, already defiled by shameful memories. It now became a scene of festering putrefaction, mitigated by the fire more quickly consuming what the worms destroyed com-

paratively slowly. In *Is.* lxvi. 24 a prophet, writing perhaps in the fourth century B.C., speaks of the worm that shall not die, and the fire that shall not be quenched, and this constant putrefaction and combustion were two impressive characteristics of Gehenna. But before the time of Jesus, this valley, with its double defilement from former memories and present uses, had become the symbol by which to speak of the future punishment of the wicked. Probably there were some who supposed that that actual valley would be the scene of a terrible retribution, but the general usage was simply to take its horrors as a figurative illustration of the penalty deserved by sin and sure to be inflicted by a righteous God. There is good evidence of the prevailing belief in a future state either of reward or punishment, in the book of *Daniel* xii. 2, and further information may be drawn from the book of *Enoch*.¹

How far Jesus shared these views is doubtful; but he no doubt spoke of fire in the twofold sense in which it occurs in the Old Testament, as the symbol not only of pain and trouble, but also of purification (e.g., *Is.* iv. 4, xlvi. 10; *Mal.* iii. 2, 3). It is this thought which leads up to the declaration, verse 49, that everyone must be salted with fire. Salt keeps food from corruption, and similarly the purifying influence of fire, *i.e.*, of trial and trouble, pain and sorrow in many forms, would keep the disciples free from the corrupting influences of the world. All these thoughts have a Pauline cast, due no doubt

¹ See *Life in Palestine*, p. 173, sqq. *First Three Gospels*, p. 114.

to the writer's association with St. Paul in preaching the gospel of Christ.

30. Jesus and his disciples now leave the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi and travel southward to Capernaum, ver. 33, from whence they start for Jerusalem, x. i.

35. There are two Latin words, *magister*, meaning 'greater,' from which are derived magistrate and master; and *minister*, meaning 'lesser,' which came to signify a servant.

38. The interpolated passage clearly begins here, but it is not clear whether it ends with verse 40 or 41.

41. **Ye are Christ's.** Comp. *1 Cor.* i. 12, iii. 23; *2 Cor.* x. 7.

42. **On me.** omitted by many ancient authorities; if the words are correctly retained, it is a unique instance in the Synoptic Gospels of 'believing in Christ.' **A great millstone.** There were millstones turned by hand, as in *Matt.* xxiv. 41; this is a larger kind turned by an ass.

43. Comp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 114, for the Rabbinical teaching about the resurrection of the body. 'The lame and the dumb would rise with their defects, and then be healed.' Such a belief accounts for the imagery of the verse, but is no proof that Jesus meant his words to be taken literally.

49. Comp. *1 Cor.* iii. 13.

50. **Salt is good.** The first half of this verse is probably an interpolation of a saying about salt made on some other occasion. It was not always easy to get good salt in Palestine, and there was a spurious substance sometimes sold as such, a powder from which all real saltiness was washed out. There are men who have great gifts and great opportunities, but whose lives are rendered worthless through their unfaithfulness to duty. It is indeed hard to find anything which will season such lives as these. The saying about **peace** brings us back to the point of departure in verses 33, 34; comp. *Rom.* xii. 18; *2 Cor.* xiii. 11; *1 Thess.* v. 13.

PART II.

JUDAEA.

DIVISION I. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. X. 1-52.

§ 34. x. 1. Public Teaching in a New Field.

[*Matt.* xix. 1, 2.]

This single verse is important for the narrative. Jesus now leaves the regions in Galilee which have hitherto been the scene of his ministry, and begins that journey to Jerusalem which leads to his crucifixion and to the new life of Christianity. We may understand from the account here that the little band crossed the Jordan to the Peraea, or country beyond Jordan, and travelled quietly down its eastern bank to the borders of Judaea; and that there, probably not far from the scene of John the Baptist's preaching, Jesus again found himself the centre of a large multitude, and resumed the public teaching which had been for a long while suspended.

§ 35. x. 2-12. The Question of Divorce.

[*Matt.* xix. 3-9. *Luke* xvi. 18.]

The narrative plainly indicates that this question of divorce was raised by Pharisees who came to Jesus as soon as he was to be found publicly teaching in this new district. But the phrase, verse 10, 'in the house,' has hitherto always meant the house at Capernaum, and it is quite possible that the discussion took place in that town previous to the departure from Galilee, and that we have here another instance of the 'want of order' which confessedly attaches to the Gospel narrative. It is, however, at least equally possible that Jesus and his companions, remaining for some time in the new locality, secured there a house which served them as a temporary home. We can judge best from the tone of the whole passage that the events here related have some connection with this journey to Jerusalem, but the exact time and place of their occurrence may very well have been forgotten.

We need not attempt here to discuss the question of divorce. It is sufficient to refer to *Deut.* xxiv. 1-4, to understand how very cruelly this law affected the position of a wife. It was a question among the Rabbis what sort of an 'unseemly thing' constituted a valid ground for sending a wife away, and some maintained that it was sufficient if she was not a good cook, or if in any trifling way she failed to please her husband. It was all part of the universal oriental custom which regarded the wife as the slave of her husband, bought with his money; and it was presumed

that he would not part with a piece of property without good reason. The special aim and result of the law in *Deut.* xxiv. 1-4 would be to diminish the facility and frequency of divorce on trivial grounds. But Jesus desired a far more radical change in the relation between the sexes. He goes back to the beginning, to the facts and laws of creation. There is no indication, either in *Gen.* i. 27 or in ii. 18-24, that the woman was designed to be merely the property of the man; on the contrary, God intended that the two should be one, and that each, by having a certain individuality, should find a new and fuller life in common. The bond thus established is so sacred that it has the right to supersede the earliest tie of filial relationship (always a tie of immense strength among primitive races); marriage becomes an institution divinely sanctioned and ordained, and Jesus sums up the true spirit of the union in one of his immortal sayings, 'What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder.'

There is a striking correspondence between this passage and the words of St. Paul in *1 Cor.* vii. 10-11. 'But unto the married I give charge, *yea*, not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband (but 'and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else 'be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband 'leave not the wife.' The whole of the chapters v.-viii. deal with the difficult relations between the sexes, particularly in regard to the spread of Christianity; and Paul, for the most part, gives his own instruction and advice (in relation to which we must remember that he expected the end of the world in a few years); but on

the question of divorce it is evident that he had heard of the emphatic judgment pronounced by Jesus.

2. **Asked him.** It is not likely that the Pharisees here tried to catch him in his talk as they did afterwards. **Tempting him**, *i.e.* trying him. It was quite common to put such questions to the Teachers or Rabbis, in order to test their knowledge, or discover their ideas.

3. **Moses.** See p. 82, for a comment on the views held by Jesus about the so-called 'Books of Moses.'

6. After 'but' supply the words, 'he wrote,' introducing the words cited from *Gen. i. 27.*

7-8, contain a quotation, somewhat amplified from *Gen. ii. 24.*

9. Jesus sums up the matter himself.

§ 36. x. 13-16. Blessing the little children.

[*Matt. xix. 13-15; xviii. 3. Luke xviii. 15-17.*]

The story of Jesus blessing the little children owes part of its meaning and interest to its connection with this critical journey to Jerusalem. The disciples who rebuked the parents were filled with anticipations of a coming strife and a final glory such as the world had never seen. But no thought of what was coming could move Jesus from his simple devotion to present duty. This is one instance among several in which the Gospel records an incident not altogether to the credit of the disciples from whom the narrative must have been derived, and this is a testimony worth having to their simple fidelity and humble self-forgetfulness. It was not only these few children whom Jesus now blessed by his words and act, but all the many millions

who have been born in Christian homes, and whose lives have been rendered happier and holier because Jesus said 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' 'of such is the kingdom of God.' With good reason this passage is read in the baptismal service of the Church; for this Church stands where Christ stood, and tries to carry on his work, and every christening repeats the invitation 'Suffer the children to come,' and pledges the Church, if it be in any sense a true Church of Christ, to make provision for welcoming the children, and doing all in its power to take them up and give them a real blessing.

13. **Touch them**, lay his hand upon their head (ver. 16) a mode of blessing as old as *Gen.* xlviii. 14. For the subsequent development of the practice, see *Acts* vi. 6; viii. 17; ix. 17; xiii. 3; *1 Tim.* iv. 14; v. 22; *2 Tim.* i. 6. **Rebuked.** Comp. *2 Kings* iv. 27, for a parallel feature in an Old Testament story.

14, 15. Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God as actually present, not still to come, as essentially consisting in a certain relation between God and man; God is the Heavenly Father, man must be humble and trustful as a little child, and equally willing to be taught and trained; thus he could enter the kingdom at once without waiting till his whole outward lot was altered. Comp. *Matt.* v. 3. 10. Only *Mark* has the words 'he was moved with indignation,' another living reminiscence. *First Three Gospels*, p. 285.

§ 37. x. 17-31. The danger of great possessions.

[*Matt.* xix. 16-30 ; *Luke* xviii. 18-30 ; xiii. 30].

The words of this narrative are for the most part identical in all three Synoptics. But Mark alone connects the story with the journey to Jerusalem 'as he [Jesus] was going forth into the way,' or 'on his way,' perhaps when he was leaving Galilee rather than when he had resumed his teaching, in the country beyond Jordan (x. 1). Mark alone mentions that the questioner ran and kneeled, that Jesus 'looking upon him, loved him,' and that 'his countenance fell'; and this Gospel alone contains ver. 24, which, however, some critics regard as a secondary and later attenuation of the apparent harshness of ver. 23. These features help us to understand a story which has been much misunderstood. There is a widely prevalent impression that Jesus was rather hard on this young man, and that the whole narrative savours of the exaggeration which renders Christianity impracticable. A little careful study will remove this impression. Probably it was the homage paid to him, as well as the salutation 'good,' which caused Jesus to refer the inquirer to God and His commandments, rather than lay upon him at once any special instructions of his own. Here is the first beginning of man's attempt to give to Christ what Christ would have us give to God. But the answer of Jesus distinctly implies that eternal life shall be won by faithful observance of the ordinary duties of morality; and if there had been nothing more in the

young man than had so far appeared, he would have gone away well satisfied that he was making the best of both worlds. But there was something more, something most pathetically suggested in his words, 'All these things have I observed from my youth.' They tell of a soul not satisfied with the fulfilment of customary precepts, longing for something higher, but not knowing what it is that is wanting. Jesus knows, and loves him for it. The young man wants an opportunity for self-sacrifice, life has been too easy for him, he has had no chance of saving his life by losing it; he shall now have the opportunity. Surely we can understand that Jesus made his offer out of love, not as the condition of a hard master. See what really were the two alternatives. Riches were not the comfort then that they are now: in the disturbed condition of Palestine, it would be most difficult for any rich man to continue keeping the commandments, and derive much happiness from his wealth; and even the moral life he had been leading had brought him no satisfaction or peace. On the other hand, he might have become one of the founders of the Christian Church. We might have read of his zeal in the Book of Acts; some of his own letters might have been preserved among the Epistles of the New Testament. Imagine the soul of that man looking back from another world upon two lives, the life he did lead, and the life he might have led, realising the results of the work done by Christ and his followers,—would he not then feel that he had rejected one of the most glorious opportunities ever offered to anyone in this world? If the terms seemed hard at the time, this was only

because he could not read the future and foresee the consequences of his choice. Jesus made this condition because it would have established a wholly false relation between these first disciples if one of them had been wealthy and all the rest completely poor. The Epistle of James, ii. 1-6, shows us how soon difficulties arose in the early Church in connection with the possession of wealth. Jesus felt that the new movement must, at any rate, start free from all such difficulties, among those who stood on the same level of an honourable poverty. It was to make its way first among the poor, and the teachers must be as poor as those they taught. The condition, therefore, was no arbitrary test, imposed simply as a test, which is the mark of a hateful tyranny; it was a stipulation essential to the successful carrying on of a great work of God.

Another misunderstanding has arisen from the notion that Christ now requires all who would be his followers to begin by giving away their whole wealth to the poor. Jesus never laid down any hard and fast rules for human conduct. He indicated the spirit in which we ought to act, gave us as commandments certain living principles of conduct, and then left his disciples to apply these principles in accordance with the special circumstances of the case. Nothing is clearer now than that duty does not require rich men to give away their wealth indiscriminately among the poor, but to use it wisely and kindly, as a trust from God to be reverently administered in the furtherance of His will.

It is evident from the narrative that Jesus was not prepared for the rejection of his offer. He was first

surprised that the man showed so much more earnestness, such a much deeper nature, than had appeared when he only asked how to inherit eternal life. And then Jesus was surprised again to find that, in spite of this earnest desire for a higher life, the man could not perform the simple, unworldly act which was the first step towards it.

The whole incident bore impressive witness to the extent to which riches, especially the habit of relying on them, may hinder a man from entering the kingdom of God. So Jesus spoke some words which must often have been remembered in the days of the early Church, and which deserve to be more remembered than they are at the present day for the sake of the eternal truth which they contain.

17. **Eternal life** hardly meant the same then as the words would mean to-day; it is 'admission to the privileges of the kingdom, a share in the glories of Israel's future,' *First Three Gospels*, p. 114. Properly speaking, it was not a religious idea, at least, nearly all the real religion now in it has been added by Christianity. Comp. pp. 43, 44 for the meaning of 'eternal.'

18. We sometimes find this verse quoted as a proof that Jesus must be God because we know he is good. His words could hardly be more perversely twisted. Their obvious meaning is to draw a distinction between Jesus, who does not wish to be called good, and God, who, according to Jesus, alone is good. Of course, this is using the word good in its highest sense, and it is just the purest and holiest men and women who have the highest conception of what goodness really is, and who feel that in God there is a perfect holiness which they never reach, though they regard it as their rightful aim (*Matt.* v. 38). The sense of sin, of coming short of a possible ideal, was, *e.g.*, very strong in John Wesley.

21. **Treasure in Heaven**, can only mean those spiritual qualities which nothing in this world can alter, and which death cannot destroy. Comp. *Luke* xii. 33; *Matt.* vi. 20. We shall begin the future life by being, morally and spiritually, what we have made ourselves here. It is by winning character here; a loving, faithful heart; a brave and generous disposition; a soul of integrity and purity, that we can lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, and secure not only eternal life but a life rich with all the highest blessings God can give us.

25. **A needle's eye**. There have been various attempts to rationalise this saying. The best is that which explains the needle's eye as the side entrance of the town gate, intended only for foot-passengers, and too low to admit a loaded camel without its going down on its knees and crawling through. Probably, however, Jesus is only using a strong oriental figure of speech.

27. **All things are possible with God**, does not mean that God can work any miracle, but that God's will always prevails, so that we can do anything so long as we are 'with God.' There is a great difference between praying that God may be with us and let our wills prevail, and praying to be with God. 'He always wins who sides with God.'

28-31. These verses are instructive, indicating the hopes and expectations of early Christians, *First Three Gospels*, p. 112. 'For the gospel's sake' is a Pauline expression peculiar to Mark. Comp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 279.

§ 38. x. 32-45. The sons of Zebedee.¹

[*Matt.* xx. 17-28; *Luke* xviii. 31-33.]

To the request of the sons of Zebedee there is prefixed a third warning of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, with the addition of a further detail, viz., a reference to the double trial which took place,

¹ *First Three Gospels*, pp. 93, 94, 225, 347, 384, 392.

first before Caiaphas, and then before Pilate. We need not repeat what has been already said concerning the difficulties of believing that details of any kind were foretold by Jesus,¹ but we may take the passage as evidence of how continuously he tried to impress upon his disciples different anticipations from those which filled their minds. They shared the prevalent impression, and expected the establishment of a glorious kingdom upon earth. Their Master would be its ruler and occupy the central throne, but who would come next to him, and sit on his right hand and on his left, as in the state magnificence of an oriental monarchy? The accounts of a grand Indian *Durbar* will perhaps best explain the kind of glory thus implied. It is not that these disciples altogether ignore, or are unwilling to share, the trials and the sufferings which must precede the glory; they are ready, or at any rate, they think themselves so, but their thoughts hurry on to what they really care about, *viz.*, their reward. So it was in the early ages of the Christian Church. The disciples were comparatively little concerned about past and present; they lived in the future. Such a mood made the Church marvellously independent of worldly terrors or advantages; but it is *not* the spirit which Jesus demanded of his followers, or that of his own labours. In modern days we are trying to get nearer to the right spirit by fixing our thoughts more upon the work and less on the recompense, either in this or in a future life. We feel that we ought to be satisfied if we are given the cup and the

¹ See p. 105.

baptism; the rest is to be left to God. A great English general has told us that the young officer's road to honour and advancement is to try in every legitimate way to get killed; if he thinks of saving himself, reserving himself, living to fight another day, such thoughts are fatal to his career—the highest places are prepared for those only who think of nothing but of doing the whole duty immediately before them. It is easy to transfer this conception to the Christian warfare with sin and suffering.

But the explanation finally given by Jesus goes deeper than this, goes to the very root of the matter. Rank in his kingdom, he says, is only to be won by service. Our modern recognition of this fundamental principle is a very real and important fact. It has made the word 'service,' as has been well said, *the watchword of the day*. Even the Prime Minister is only the First Servant, nominally of the Crown, but really of the People.

32. The way, the road leading from the fords of the Jordan up to Jerusalem. It passed through Jericho, verse 46. In the narrative as it stands, the real order of events is reversed. The first half of this verse, almost wholly peculiar to Mark, gives a vivid recollection of a striking scene, Jesus leading on his reluctant followers; and having written that, Mark feels that he must add something to account for this reluctance and falls back upon the tradition that Jesus plainly foretold his fate. On the spirit animating Jesus in this journey, see p. 127 sq., and compare the hymn,

'The Saviour, what a noble flame.'

35. James and John may have been a little better off than most of the Twelve, for we heard that their father had 'hired servants' (i. 20); they may have contributed largely to the

support of the missionary work in Galilee and to this expedition to Jerusalem (comp. xv. 41); the surname given them by Jesus (iii. 17) suggests that they were eloquent preachers. Reasons such as these may have made them think themselves entitled to the two leading positions for which they ask; similar reasons influence men to-day; but Jesus tells us distinctly that the possession of superior gifts, either material or mental, will not determine rank in the kingdom of God.

38. **The cup**, a prophetic image of a terrible fate. Comp. *Is.* li. 17; *Jer.* xlix. 12. **Baptised**. In some of the Psalms, *e.g.*, xlii. 7; lxix. 1, 2, 15; cxxiv. 4, danger is described under the figure of an overwhelming flood, but the direct reference here to baptism must be due to the influence of St. Paul. He made Christian baptism the symbol of dying with Christ and rising with him to a higher life. Comp. *Rom.* vi. 3-8; *1 Cor.* xii. 13; *Gal.* iii. 27. We read of the death of James in *Acts* xii. 2.

40. Rank is not to be given by favour, but in accordance with a great fixed principle.

41. The **indignation** of the Ten caused a later attempt to soften the worst features of this request. See *First Three Gospels*, p. 347.

42. **Are accounted**, the same word as is translated 'seemeth,' *1 Cor.* xi. 16, and 'were of repute' or 'were reputed,' *Gal.* ii. 2, 6, 9. It indicates the actual possession of a certain eminence, but suggests a doubt as to the rightfulness of the possession. The great question in all government is this: Is it carried on for the good of the governors or the good of the governed?

43. **Minister**, comp. ix. 35; the Greek word is *deacon*.

44. **Servant**. Here a stronger word is used, 'slave,' or as the R.V. puts in the margin, 'bondservant.'

45. In *John* xiii. 4-17, we have this saying, as it were, sculptured in action. In *1 Cor.* ix. 19, Paul says that he brought himself under bondage to all; and in *Philipp.* ii. 7, he expresses this thought in connection with Christ. **Ransom**, comp. *Is.* liii., especially verses 5, 6, 11; also *1 Pet.*

iii. 18. The good are constantly suffering for the evil, the just for the unjust; and, by their sufferings, redeeming or ransoming the evil and unjust from the punishment which has befallen them. On the level of human justice, this is unjust; but there is a higher level to which God invites us, when He gives His children opportunities of bearing the burdens of their weaker and less fortunate brethren; the opportunity of exercising the power of redeeming love.

§ 39. x. 46-52. **Bartimæus.**

[*Matt.* xx. 29-34. *Luke* xviii. 35-43.]

In this section we continue to find details peculiar to Mark. He alone gives the name of the blind man; he alone relates the summons to Bartimæus, and the eager haste with which he leaps up and comes to Jesus, verses 49-50. He hears the coming of the great multitude, and he is told that they are accompanying Jesus of Nazareth. Bartimæus has heard something which makes him sure that this Jesus is the long expected Christ, and hails him by a title, 'Son of David,' which would be given to no one else. The beggar is rebuked, not for making a noise; but because it seemed simply scandalous that such as he should be addressing Jesus by this title. It would be for the chief priests and elders of the Sanhedrin to decide whether Jesus were the Christ. Jesus had been called the Christ, first by a madman, who was rebuked and told to hold his peace; secondly, by Peter and the other disciples in the retirement at Caesarea Philippi, and they had been charged to tell no man of him; but now, when this blind beggar salutes him thus, Jesus

calls, heals, and dismisses him with the words 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.' This is more like an admission on his own part that he is the Christ than anything which we have previously met; but even here we must not press a phrase too far. Jesus wishes the man to know, and the multitude to recognise the fact that it is personal faith which effects the cure, and that it is only among those who have faith in him that he himself can do any great work. This is true of all leadership, and of every great work for God and humanity.

46. **Jericho**, an important town situated in a green oasis in the rocky wilderness that lay between the Jordan and Jerusalem. *Life in Pal.* p. 25-26. **Bartimæus**, the syllable 'Bar' means 'son of' in the Aramaic dialect commonly spoken then. *Mark* gives this explanation for the benefit of foreign readers, *First Three Gospels*, p. 288.

51. **Rabboni**, peculiar to *Mark's* account of this incident, a title expressing higher respect than Rabbi. Cp. *John* xx. 16.

DIVISION II. (XI.-XIII.) THE DAYS AT JERUSALEM.

§ 40. xi. 1-11. Entering in Triumph.

[*Matt.* xxi. 1-11; *Luke* xix. 28-38].

From Jericho to Jerusalem the distance is about fifteen miles measured direct, and for the last three miles the path winds round the slopes of the Mount of Olives, so that on turning the last corner a fine view of the Holy City is obtained across the valley. Shortly before reaching this point it passes through the village of Bethphage

(the house of figs) while at a little distance off lay the less important hamlet of Bethany. As we shall see, it was to this latter quiet little spot that Jesus retired each night with his disciples after spending the day in the crowded city. Here he must have had friends; and the narrative in the present section would lead us to suppose that he had arranged with them to supply him with the colt whenever he should send messengers for it with the password 'The Lord hath need of him.' What previous intimacy there may have been, we can only conjecture. Jesus may have come regularly every year to Jerusalem for the Passover, doing as little to attract public attention as at Nazareth; and some house at Bethany may always have furnished him with accommodation on these occasions, and a friendship have been formed before any of the disciples were called. Another possibility is that the leper cured in i. 40-45 was the Simon whom we shall meet in xiv. 3, and that Jesus had previously secured quarters in his house. There is no evidence for these suppositions, but it is worth noting that they are not improbable when the passage is constantly quoted as a proof of superhuman knowledge and influence on the part of Jesus.

The description of the whole event suggests that Jesus now deliberately wished to challenge public attention, and allowed himself to be the centre of a popular ovation such as he never received, and would never have allowed, at an earlier period. The company who spread garments and palm fronds, (it is the later *Luke* and *Matthew* who call them 'multitudes') is made up of Galileans who have come with him, or

met him on his approach to the city whither all steps are now tending; and it is these Galileans, who had heard his word and seen his works in their own country, who raise the shouts of welcome. But it is most characteristic of the priority and trustworthiness of our Gospel, that even these shouts of triumph as reported here do not directly proclaim Jesus as the Christ, but speak of him as coming in the name of the Lord, and in some way, at present left vague and undetermined, connect him with the expected Messianic kingdom. In the minds of all the people, and doubtless, too, in the mind of Jesus himself, it was yet to be decided, and ultimately by God Himself, who this Man of Nazareth really was.

2. A colt may as well be a young horse as a young ass. It is difficult for us to see the advantage of riding an animal never broken in for the purpose, especially in the midst of a noisy procession; but some analogy to the feeling may be found in the preference for sacrifice of heifers that had never been yoked, *Num.* xix. 2; *Deut.* xxi. 3; and it was a *new* cart that David used to carry the ark, *2 Sam.* vi. 3.

3. If *Mark* understood 'the Lord' as Jesus, and did not mean that the colt was needed for the Lord's work, it is probable that the title is due to Pauline usage. Paul constantly speaks of Jesus as 'the Lord.' Jesus would never have spoken thus of himself. *First Three Gospels*, p. 126.

4. Another graphic recollection, *Mark* alone mentions the 'colt tied at the door without in the open street,' *First Three Gospels*, p. 287.

8. *Comp.* *2 Kings* ix. 13; also the story of Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth.

9. *Hosanna*, a quotation from *Ps.* cxviii. 25, where it is translated 'Save [now] we beseech thee'; the following words are from the next verse of the Psalm.

10. **Our Father David.** It was to be David's kingdom in the sense of restoring all the glories which the popular imagination now ascribed to David's reign; also in the sense that this restoration was to be effected by a descendant of David. The *Psalms of Solomon*, written soon after 48 B.C., contain the prayer 'Behold, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, son of David, for the time which thou knowest, O God, that he may reign over Israel thy servant,' *First Three Gospels*, p. 116.

11. It has been supposed from the statement that Jesus 'looked round about upon all things' that Jerusalem was new to him. This does not follow. However familiar it may have been, he would wish now to take a solemn look round, and while doing so would doubtless meditate upon the many perplexing possibilities of action that lay before him. He would also see the sights which moved him to do what he did the next morning. This verse is peculiar to *Mark*, because in *Matthew* and *Luke* the cleansing of the temple immediately follows the triumphant entry of Jesus, on the same day.

§ 41. xi. 12-19. Cleansing the Temple.

[*Matt.* xxi. 18-19, 12-17. *Luke* xix. 45-48; xxi. 37-38.]

The attention which Jesus had excited by his manner of entering Jerusalem, he now proceeded to challenge in a far more emphatic way. One thing, especially, had filled his heart with indignation when he 'looked round about upon all things' in Jerusalem. He did nothing that evening, according to our account, but retired for the night with his disciples to Bethany. The next morning, he returned to Jerusalem, and took a step, which more than anything else, precipitated the crisis. The innermost shrine of the Temple was the

Holy of Holies, a dark chamber, perfectly empty, entered by the High Priest alone, and by him only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. Next to that came the Holy Place, which might be entered only by the superior Priests, when they had to perform certain stated functions. This building was the House of the Lord. In front of it was the Court of the Priests, which only Priests might tread, and where they offered the burnt sacrifices on the great brazen altar. Next came the Court which only male Israelites might enter, separated from a Court into which Jewish women might go. Outermost of all, was the Court of the Gentiles, separated from the rest of the Temple by a barrier which none but Jews might pass under pain of death. This Court was provided for the Gentiles 'who feared the Lord,' *i.e.*, for the numerous class of persons, not Jews by birth, not formally converted to Judaism, but anxious to worship the God of the Jews, though probably they did not confine their worship to Him alone. It was this Court which was now turned into a market, and thronged by the Jews attending the Passover and wishing to make the prescribed offerings to the Temple. Here they could buy oxen, sheep, and pigeons, meal, salt, oil, and incense; and here they could change the common Greek and Roman money, such as the *denarius* (translated penny, stamped with what they regarded as the idolatrous image of Caesar), for the shekel and half-shekel which alone they could pay into the Temple Treasury. Trade in Eastern cities is generally carried on by a system of bargaining very slightly removed from dishonesty, the seller naming a price much higher than he is really willing to accept,

and taking full advantage of any ignorance on the part of the buyer. The whole tone of all this business would be morally offensive to the prophet fresh from the simple country life of Galilee; but through this court every Jew had to pass to worship God, and, worst of all, it was *in* this court that every Gentile had to offer up his prayers. Indignation at such a religious wrong, such a perversion of the real requirements of religion, moved Jesus to drive these dealers out of the Temple and insist on the consecration of the whole place to worship.

There is much historical interest in the incident. It enables us to gauge the present position of Jesus with some accuracy. He had at his back a sufficient force to support him in this daring act. He comes forward as a prophet with a considerable reputation, and there are thousands ready to follow him if he will lead them the way they want to go. He relies, not in vain, on their religious zeal in effecting this purification of the Temple. But the act has a different meaning in his mind and in theirs. To him, it is part of the purification of the human soul, and the establishment of the right relation between the human child and the Heavenly Father; having done this, in obedience to an imperative moral instinct, a direct Divine command, Jesus was prepared to wait till God should indicate the next step that should be taken. To the multitude, the act was part of the purification of the land by the expulsion of its heathen rulers, the prelude to a revolt against the Romans; it had religious significance for them, as a means of winning divine support for doing what they wanted to do. Having done this, they were the more

eager to know how soon Jesus was going to call on them to do something else of the same sort, the more ready to be disappointed with him when he did not further rely upon force, the more disposed to regard him as an impostor when he had fallen, powerless, into the hands of his enemies.

It has been said that this cleansing the Temple was a false move on the part of Jesus, that it raised the very expectation that he was bound to disappoint. No doubt this is true, but it is so much more evidence that Jesus was not acting on a carefully calculated policy, but doing from day to day what he felt to be the Divine Will. He had sufficient power given him to right this wrong, and he at once did what he could do. Then he waited for a further sign from God. And that further sign was to be the Sign of the Cross, and the victory was to be won through the utter sacrifice of self.

12-14. These verses are considered in the next section.

16. Peculiar to *Mark*. Perhaps part of the Temple was being used as a business thoroughfare.

17. Quotation from *Is.* lvi. 7, where heathen converts are described as coming to offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord, and joining in the Temple worship. The expression 'den of robbers' is applied to the Temple in *Jer.* vii. 11.

18. **Astonished**, as on the first day at Capernaum (i. 22); it was the tone of authority used by Jesus, in speaking the word of God as a prophet of God, not interpreting the law of Moses as a scribe, that so astonished the people and excited the fears of the priests.

§ 42. xi. 20-26. The Fig-tree and its Lesson.¹

[*Matt.* xxi. 20-22, vii. 7, vi. 14, 15. *Luke* xvii. 5, 6, xi. 9, 4].

In the favoured land of Gennesaret figs might be gathered during ten months of the year, but 'the season of figs' was very much shorter in Judæa with its poorer soil and harsher climate. Just before Easter, probably in our month of April, the early summer figs would not be ripe, and the late ones of autumn would be all gone, so that on the tree there was 'nothing but leaves.' There is profound pathos in the word 'he hungered'; they remind us of the warning 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but 'the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (*Matt.* viii. 20, *Luke* ix. 58), words which seem to embody a recollection of some of the hardships encountered in these days. But can we believe that Jesus, angry with this tree for not bearing fruit out of season, cursed it, and thereby caused it to wither away? Such a belief has proved a great stumbling-block to all apologetic commentators on the Gospels. We may without hesitation reject it, and feel sure that the disciples, who misunderstood so much that Jesus said and did, failed to understand him here. On the one hand, the whole story may have grown out of the parable which we have in *Luke* xiii. 6-9; or both parable and story may have grown out of the imagery in which the prophets of the Old Testament compared the people of Israel to a vine or a fig-tree which bore no good fruit, and was, therefore, condemned to

¹ *First Three Gospels*, 80, 96, 199, 282, 293, 356.

destruction.¹ On the other hand, if we look closely at the words in *Mark*, we seem able to recognise the real historical incident which later tradition seized and modified. It is only in *Matthew* that the fig-tree is described as withering immediately after the words of Jesus in a way that leaves room for no other causation. The facts given us by *Mark* are these: one morning, Jesus and his companions failed to find any fruit on the tree; and the next morning they noticed the tree itself withered away. We have seen enough of the prevalent state of belief to understand how if these two facts existed, and there is nothing unlikely in either of them, the next element in the story would easily be supplied by the minds of the people who would at once jump to the conclusion that the fig-tree was dying because Jesus cursed it. In reality, there may have been some other cause for the tree's withering, and any words spoken by Jesus may have been no curse, but only a comparison of this tree which bore nothing but leaves to a nation which made a great outward show of religious ceremony and ostentatious piety, but bore none of the fruit of real righteousness.

The connection between this incident and the following verses about faith and prayer is lost. Jesus did not mean that as God had granted his prayer to curse this tree, so He would grant any other petition asked in faith. He who told us to 'forgive' would not have just shown himself unreasonably angry with a tree. But we can readily believe that

¹ *Comp. Is. v. 1-7, Ps. lxxx. 8-15, Hos. ix. 10, Jer. xxiv. 2-10, First Three Gospels 192-3.* Similar threatenings are frequent, as *Is. xi. 4, Mal. iv. 6.*

during this morning walk from Bethany to Jerusalem Jesus was trying to kindle in the hearts of his disciples such a faith in God as supported himself. This faith in God is his own guiding principle; it supplies us with the key to the whole present conduct of Jesus. He knows that nothing is impossible with God, who can remove any mountain of difficulty; it is not a question of the greatness of the obstacle, but of what is the Will of God. If, therefore, we can only learn what is the divine will and make ourselves desire that same thing; if we have the closest possible walk with God, listening constantly to His voice, instantly obeying His commands, steadily learning more and more to love His service—and all this is summed up in the exhortation 'Have faith in God'—then we shall without fail receive the very things for which we pray, for we shall pray 'Thy will be done,' *and that shall come to pass*—in God's own way and time. This was the lesson Jesus taught that morning to his disciples; the words recorded here can be no more than a mere summary of what he said, and may not even be an altogether accurate summary; but that matters little, for his conduct at this crisis taught this same lesson more eloquently than any words.

14. 'Answered and said' elsewhere loosely used, for 'began to say,' without reference to what precedes. Comp. ix. 5; x. 51; xii. 35; xiv. 48.

22. It is characteristic of the early genuine recollections embodied in *Mark* that the exhortation here is to have faith in *God*.

23. *This mountain*. An allusion to a well-known symbol of the conquest of obstacles. Rabbis distinguished

for their cleverness were sometimes called 'removers of mountains.' Comp. *1 Cor.* xiii. 2. Here the phrase denotes the large pile of difficulties which prevented the Jews from allowing Jesus to reform their whole national life and religion.

25. **Stand**, the usual attitude of prayer, *Matt.* vi. 5, *Luke* xviii. 11. The first thing they would do on entering the Temple would be to stand praying. Their minds are now naturally filled with angry feelings towards their Master's enemies, but Jesus tells them while they are praying to God they are to forgive, in order to secure the divine forgiveness for themselves. Verse 26 is not in the oldest and best MSS. It has been added from *Matt.* vi. 15, xviii. 35, and is a good illustration of the tendency to fill out the sayings of Jesus by passages from other sources.

§ 43. xi. 27-33. By what authority ?

[*Matt.* xxi. 23-27; *Luke* xx. 1-8.]

Soon after reaching the temple, Jesus is very naturally confronted by the rulers of his nation and asked to explain his conduct. They had heard of his driving the dealers out of the temple, and of the words with which he had branded them for allowing such traffic in the Court of the Gentiles. They had met to consider how they should deal with this Galilean prophet who set them at defiance; they dare not arrest him openly; at any rate, not while Jerusalem is crowded with provincial Jews come up for the Passover, quite half of whom are ready to accept Jesus as their leader if he will call upon them to revolt against the Romans. Indeed, in such a case, the very rulers would willingly have tried to utilise him to further their own ends.

But what was he intending to do? What position did he mean to take up? They wanted him to state his claims clearly; and if he had done this, they would next have proposed that these claims should be submitted to some test by which God might decide them. Jesus would have been once again met with the demand for a sign from heaven.

This he saw, and hence the nature of his answer. John had worked no miracles; we hear nothing of them in the Bible, nor yet in the far more extended account of his activity given us by Josephus. Yet all the people counted John as a prophet; it was the rulers who did not believe him. Had they now said that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus might have replied that he was carrying on the same work, and called upon them to assist it by repentance and practical righteousness. On the other hand, if they now had the courage of their convictions and dared to say that John's baptism was of men, not authorised by God, there would then have been a clear issue between the two parties. Any further argument would have turned upon that issue, which Jesus would evidently have preferred to a strife over his own personal claims. But they will not decide his question, and he feels that it would only do harm to answer theirs. All this we can understand; but so strongly are we prepossessed in favour of simple straightforwardness, that there may be in our minds some lingering wonder why Jesus did not now speak out, and openly assert his Messiahship. Jesus did not do this. After having entered Jerusalem with the utmost publicity, after having practically claimed an authority

superior to that of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders by overthrowing an institution which they allowed, he now refuses to say who gave him this authority. Did his courage fail him at this decisive moment? His subsequent conduct shows no want of it; and we cannot believe that it was lacking now. No, Jesus was 'walking by faith'; he was doing, day by day and hour by hour, what he felt was the will of God, speaking what was given him to speak by the Holy Spirit, and he did not now feel God's command to declare himself the Christ. That is the simple, sufficient explanation of his conduct. He shared the conviction, held by every religious Jew, that God could intervene at any moment with irresistible influence, and sweep away all opposition; to do this might be the will of God; it was for him to wait for the revelation of that will. And we, who can look back through eighteen centuries, can understand how the change which Jesus sought was and is to come about, not by any sudden irresistible outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but by the slow patient working of that same Spirit through successive generations. For with God a thousand years are but as yesterday, and it is Jesus himself who told us that the Kingdom of God would come not with observation, but as a silent gradual natural growth.

27. **The chief priests**, &c., a deputation of members of the Sanhedrin, or supreme Jewish Council; comp. x. 33; xi. 18; xiv. 1, 43, 53, 55; xv. i. The high priest was its president, and the seventy others of whom it was composed consisted of representatives of the families from which the high priest might be chosen, and of other members of pure

Jewish families who 'had the right of marriage with the priestly caste,' *Life in Palestine*, p. 66.

32. Note the proper use of the word **prophet**, one who speaks for God, and has divine authority for what he says and does. Comp. section 28.

§ 44. xii. 1-12. Parable of the Vineyard.

[*Matt.* xxi. 33-46; *Luke* xx. 9-19.]

Though Jesus refused to publicly make the decisive claim to be the Christ, he continued to teach in the temple with his usual authority. Unfortunately, most of what he said must have been driven out of the memories of the disciples by the tragic catastrophe which so soon followed; what they did recollect and record is chiefly certain sayings which had some direct application to the coming troubles. This makes it very difficult for us now to be sure whether we have the actual words of Jesus, or the tradition which grew up under the knowledge of the subsequent events. Is this parable of the vineyard a correct report of what he himself uttered, or is it a reflection of the thought of the Apostolic age, or is it partly one and partly the other, a genuine recollection modified by later influences? This third supposition seems most in consonance with the general characteristics of our gospel. There are traits in the story which have a most genuine ring; there are others which seem undoubtedly to owe their form to the consciousness of what actually happened; and where this is the case, we should not press

such words and phrases to support a view of Jesus not clearly sanctioned by statements of more decided authenticity. Would Jesus really have spoken of himself, even in a parable, as the beloved son, the heir of the vineyard, and have distinctly described this son as killed and cast forth out of the vineyard? If he did so, it was a veiled form of claiming to be the Christ, coupled with a repetition of the warnings he had already given respecting the disastrous fate which he anticipated. In the next place, we may ask is it likely that Jesus would have announced that the vineyard would be taken away from the husbandmen and given to others? This is exactly what did take place, and was so sore a trouble to St. Paul, as we see in *Romans* ix.-xi. The special religious privileges which made the Jews the peculiar people of God, were taken away from them and given to a Church mainly composed of Gentile converts. We cannot say it is impossible that Jesus should have uttered a prophecy to this effect, foreseeing it as the inevitable consequence of the Jewish attitude towards himself and the reformation he desired to effect; but we cannot feel sure that we have his words unaltered by tradition. The facts illustrated by the parable are among the most momentous in the world's history. The selection of the Israelites, and the endowment of them as a race with certain qualities capable of bearing rich spiritual fruit, the prophetic demands for righteousness as the return required by God, the frequent ill-treatment of the prophets by their countrymen, culminating in this rejection of their Christ—all this is a striking epitome

of one side of the history of Israel from the time of Samuel to the days of Jesus. There was, however, another side, which till lately has been too much overlooked. While successive generations of prophets were often persecuted for requiring a purity of conduct far above the current standard of morality and religion, this standard did rise century after century as the prophetic teachings were assimilated. Thus the spiritual life of the people, especially as shown in the composition of the Psalms, did become deeper and purer, till, at length, Jesus himself came forward, and his life and teaching give us the high-water mark of prophetic Judaism.

1. **A vineyard.** For this comparison of the Jewish state, see note on p. 156, and comp. especially *Is. v. 1-7*.

2. **A servant.** Note that the prophets are spoken of as the slaves (bondservants) of God. This may indicate Pauline thought, comp. *Rom. i. 1*, but it was also an Old Testament usage. The first season would be the fifth year after planting, *Lev. xix. 23-25*.

7. **The heir.** There is great incongruity to our minds in speaking of anyone as the heir of God, for we never think of the inheritance of property except as a consequence of the death of the former owner. But there was an ancient usage, especially prominent in Roman Law, which explains the phrase here and in St. Paul's epistles, *Rom. viii. 17*; *Gal. iv. 7*. It is the law of 'adoption,' under which any non-relative could be adopted into the family and constituted an heir, receiving precisely the same position as a legitimate son. Thus to be an heir and to be a son practically became convertible expressions, referring rather to the position actually enjoyed in the household than to expectations which would not be realised till after the death of the proprietor.

Hence the possibility of speaking of children of God as heirs of God.

8. Comp. *1 Kings* xxi. 1-16, which may have suggested some features in the story, especially the casting forth out of the vineyard.

10. The quotation is from *Ps.* cxviii. 22, 23, where the original reference is to the destiny of Israel among other nations. It became a favourite quotation with early Christian writers, *Acts.* iv. 11; *1 Pet.* ii. 7; comp. *Eph.* ii. 20.

§ 45. xii. 13-40. Thrusts and Parries.¹

[*Matt.* xxii. 15-xxiii. 3; *Luke* xx. 20-47].

(a) PAYING TRIBUTE, xii. 13-17.

Foiled in their attempt to secure a direct statement of the claims of Jesus, and afraid to arrest him while he was the centre of so much popular expectation, his various opponents now try to catch him in talk. It was a process not unlike that of 'heckling' a parliamentary candidate, forcing him to declare himself on disputed points, so that, whatever answer he gave, some of his hearers might be annoyed and induced to withhold their support. In this first case, moreover, there was the additional element of hypocrisy in their mode of address and reference to him as one who fearlessly taught the way of God. But the question was very cunningly devised. If Jesus answered that it was not lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, he would be at once denounced to the Roman authorities as a rebel against them, and they might be trusted to prevent his doing further mischief

¹ Comp. Dr. Martineau, *Seat of Authority*, p. 632-5.

among the people. If Jesus affirmed it lawful, such a declaration would be fatal to his influence with his Jewish followers. The appropriateness of the reply made by Jesus consists in his giving an answer which could not be used against him either way, but which most ingeniously turned the extreme Jewish fanaticism into a form to which no Roman Governor would object. If the Jews really hated this money, and thought the tribute such a sign of an irreligious servitude, why did they keep such coins in their possession? Why did they not give them all back to Cæsar? But this answer is far more than a clever retort. It is the statement of a great principle, convicting these Jews of hypocrisy. They were willing to take all the advantages of being included in the Roman Empire, willing to make use of all the opportunities for trade and gain afforded by the 'Roman peace,' they were willing enough to use the Roman money, but their religious scruples forbade them to pay for the advantages they thus enjoyed! And the principle goes further and deeper still in its distinction between what is due to Cæsar and what is due to God. This distinction was of the utmost value to the early Christians who had to solve the difficult problem of being both good citizens and good Christians while subject to a heathen government. Sometimes, in the days of the persecution, the double claim could not be satisfied. The conversion of Constantine (A.D. 323), and the adoption of Christianity by the State, at once introduced a difference; and this difference reaches its maximum in a modern, self-governing, state, with widely representative institutions, and the power to

make and unmake its own laws. Cæsar is now the people, and the people do not deliberately ordain what they know to be contrary to the will of God. But a difficulty may still arise when a minority regard some law as immoral or irreligious: and individuals *may* have to choose between obeying the law of the land or the voice of God in their own souls. The opposition to the American Fugitive Slave Act was of this conscientious character, and slighter instances might easily be quoted. But it is obviously so much better to try to alter a bad law than to disobey it; carrying it out is so often the best way to prove the need of change, that it is only in the most extreme cases that sensible men now find it difficult to pay due allegiance to Cæsar and to God.

13. **Pharisees and Herodians.** We have met this ill-omened conjunction in the earlier Galilean days, comp. iii. 6.

14. **Regardest not the person of men.** An Old Testament phrase, *Deut.* x. 17, *2 Chron.* xix. 7, *Job.* xxxiv. 19. Comp. *Rom.* ii. 11, *Gal.* ii. 6, for 'respect of persons' with Paul; also *Acts* x. 34, *Eph.* vi. 9, *Col.* iii. 25, *1 Peter* i. 17, for early Christian usage. **Tribute.** Comp. ii. 13-17, and *Life in Pal.* p. 80-84. The reigning Cæsar was Tiberius, the second Roman Emperor. Judas of Galilee, who raised the revolt referred to in *Acts* v. 37, specially denied the lawfulness of paying tribute.

15. **Penny.** See note on vi. 37.

16. The Romans had sufficient regard for Jewish religious prejudice to coin money specially for their use without the idolatrous image. But the Jewish prejudice was evidently not sufficiently strong to prevent their taking the objectionable money when it came to them in the way of gain.

(b) THE QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES, xii. 18-27.

Most of the priests and many of the well-to-do Jews of Jerusalem were Sadducees, and they now try to get an answer out of Jesus which they may quote to his disadvantage. This question is a good example of the hair-splitting casuistry of the ordinary Rabbis, who liked to discuss every possible and all but impossible case. We need not imagine that they are stating a fact which really took place; indeed, it is doubtful how far this institution of 'the Levirate,' as it is called, was ever practically carried out. The reply made by Jesus announces that the future life shall not be a mere continuation of the earthly life, but shall involve a great change of the bodily nature. This thought is developed by St. Paul in *1 Cor.* xv., particularly verses 35-53. Having thus set aside their frivolous objection, Jesus passes on to a much deeper thought, which has gradually led to the modern Christian belief in immortality. It is the conviction that there is no death for the soul, but only for the body, and that instead of waiting for a resurrection of these dead bodies we are to think of every child of God as living for ever somewhere in the Father's house. St. Paul, especially in his later years,¹ realised this new truth, and his whole teaching about dying with Christ in baptism and then rising with him to new life² is a development of the same great idea. But it was a faith too exalted for the early Church generally. For centuries it clung, and its less educated adherents still cling, to the belief in a general bodily resurrection,

¹ *Comp. Phil.* i. 23 as compared with *1 Thess.* iv. 13-17. ² See p. 146.

until which those who have died remain practically dead. One change, however, was immediately introduced among the early Christians. They had believed in a poor shadowy life, lived in the gloom of the underworld, a creed almost wholly without influence on morals and religion, and in its place they acquired a faith in a future state so bright and glorious that it could inspire the courage of the 'noble army of martyrs,' and in a 'judgment to come' which determined the conduct and moulded the character of all real believers. In early days this faith required the prevalent conviction in the speedy coming of the Christ to punish his enemies and reward his adherents. As this conviction has faded away, its place has been taken by a return to the belief of Jesus himself that those who die to us still live to God.

We may form various estimates of the validity of the proof here adduced by Jesus. Most of the old-world arguments for immortality seem to us wanting in logical cogency, as when Plato in the *Phaedo* seeks to establish first the pre-existence of the soul and from that proceeds to infer its immortality. To those who believe in any form of divine inspiration, the fact that Jesus held this conviction is strong ground for holding that the conviction must be true. It is Jesus and Paul and all other faithful followers who 'are of all men most miserable,' if God suffered them to be deceived in looking forward to a future life. But if their belief mainly rested upon direct personal assurance of a Father's love, we need not wonder that it should be rather this faith itself than the reasons alleged in its support which appeals most strongly to our minds.

18. **Sadducees**, an aristocratic wealthy party among the Jews, chiefly composed of the priests, living on good terms with the Romans, caring for the Temple ritual and all their priestly privileges. What chiefly distinguished them from their great rivals, the Pharisees, was that they would accept only the Written Law, and none of the Scribe-made comment on it. As their Scriptures nowhere promise immortality, they rejected all belief in a future life. Comp. *Acts* xxiii. 6-8, *Life in Palestine*, pp. 139-142.

19. See *Deut.* xxv. 5-10; comp. *Ruth* iii. iv. **Seed** means a child, or children, as frequently in the Bible.

24. **Power of God**, comp. *Rom.* iv. 17.

26. **The bush**, the title of the section of the Pentateuch containing the words here quoted, *Exodus* iii. 6.

(c) THE TWO COMMANDMENTS, verses 28-34.

The third question put to Jesus seems to have been asked in good faith, and it referred to a real difficulty felt by those who were honestly trying to fulfil the Mosaic Law. For the scribes declared that in their law there were six hundred and thirteen commandments, three-hundred and sixty-five of them prohibitions, all of equal importance and stringency; and it was impossible that such a moral system could be upheld without constantly involving contradictions and conflicting claims. But though there was this theoretical equality among the Jewish commandments, there was one whose supremacy would be readily admitted; it has been, and remains, the great confession of Jewish faith, or watchword of Israel, known as the 'Sh'má Israel,' from the first two words, meaning, 'Hear, O Israel.' Mark gives it as Jesus no doubt quoted it, including the fourth as well as the fifth verse of *Deut.* vi. It is difficult accurately to trans-

late this fourth verse, as will be seen by referring to the margin of the Revised Version: but the meaning is not hard to understand. We must remember that the word 'Lord' is used here because by this time the Jews had come to think it irreverent to use the proper name of their God, Yahveh; and, indeed, all necessity for having a proper name for God disappeared when they came to accept a really strict monotheism. Names are required to distinguish different objects all belonging to the same class; and so long as men believed in a large class of deities, names were wanted for the individuals composing it. Thus Israel's first commandment had probably once been, 'Yahveh is our God.' While other nations in other places worship their gods, the Israelites might only worship Yahveh. From the eighth century B.C., onwards, the prophets led the way to the ever stronger and deeper conviction that there was no God at all but Yahveh, that the rest were merely idols, the work of men's hands. The release from the Babylonian captivity finally confirmed this faith, and the words of *Deuteronomy*, perhaps slightly but not greatly altered, have ever since been understood as the most solemn affirmation of this great truth.

The fourfold, 'heart, soul, mind, strength,' given us in *Mark*, must not be taken as a psychological analysis of human nature corresponding in some way to the modern division into Intellect, Emotions, and Will; the philosophy of ancient days was quite different, making a threefold division into Body, Soul, and Spirit. The repetition must rather be

taken as a way of ensuring, in legal fashion, that the whole ground is covered. Just as *Deuteronomy* is fond of repeating 'the statutes, the commandments, the testimonies, and the judgments,' each word meaning the same thing, so here, repetition lends emphasis to the declaration that God is to be loved with the whole man.

The second commandment stands in a somewhat different relation. Jesus picked it out from a practical chapter (xix.) embedded in the ceremonial legislation of the book of *Leviticus*. He did not compose the commandment himself, any more than he composed the clauses of the Lord's prayer, but here as there, he put the fundamental principles of religion in their right places and their true proportion. He said that this commandment was worthy to stand beside the First as the Second. It is, however, a noteworthy fact that we find the precept 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' twice cited by St. Paul, *Rom.* xiii. 8-10, *Gal.* v. 14, as a summary of the whole law. This may, of course, show that other teachers before Jesus had quoted the saying and given it a supreme position; and some critics even maintain that it has found its way into the gospel from these two epistles. Much more probable, however, is it that when Paul wrote his epistles he knew of the prominence publicly assigned by Jesus to this precept. Moreover, what we find in the gospel is not exactly what we find in the epistles. What Jesus does is to place the love of man second, but second only, to the love of God. Half the significance of what he said lies

in this connection of the two duties, one to God and one to man. It assumes that while we are to give our whole love to God, this can never come into conflict with our loving our neighbours. It blends into one grand conception the thoughts of what we owe alike to our brother on earth and to our Father in heaven, and gives us the supreme principle of love to replace the many rules of formal piety and the complicated systems of morality taught by the Jewish scribes.

30. For **heart**, comp. note, p. 85; **soul** was the whole principle of life, comp. note, p. 113; **mind** properly means the whole of the mental as opposed to the material side of human nature; it often refers specially to the disposition, or moral and spiritual character. **Strength** means moral strength.

32-34. Verses peculiar to Mark and very characteristic of his narrative. They tell something that was really remembered, and so Mark writes it down. This incident throws a different light upon the character of at least some of the scribes, who were not all absorbed in questions of legal casuistry. The Old Testament, also, contains many traces, both early and late, of similar preference of moral demands over those of the sacrificial ritual. Comp. *1 Sam.* xv. 22, *Hos.* vi. 6, *Mic.* vi. 6-8, *Ps.* l. 8-15.

34. **Durst**, dared. The concluding sentence shows how little real desire for truth there was in some of these questions; from the popular point of view Jesus had defeated his adversaries.

(d) IS CHRIST THE SON OF DAVID? xii. 35-37.

The chief interest in the question, which Jesus now puts to his opponents, lies in its indication of a state of belief earlier than any church tradition on the subject. Jesus would never have asked this question

if he had known of the genealogies which traced his descent from David. Mark knows nothing of these genealogies; he probably wrote before they were compiled; so that it is quite natural that he should record the incident. But in *Matthew* and *Luke* it is deprived of all meaning by the genealogies they give, and they would never have inserted the incident at all if they had not found it already recorded in *Mark*. This is interesting evidence of Mark's priority. Moreover these genealogies, tracing the descent of Jesus from David through Joseph, belong to a period previous to the acceptance of the doctrine of the Miraculous Conception, according to which Jesus had no human father. A very considerable interval must therefore have elapsed between the time when this incident took place, say about A.D. 34, and the publication of the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke* with their present introductory stories, while Mark takes us straight back to a real event and accurately reports a genuine reminiscence of what Jesus had actually said.

It is quite true that St. Paul, writing the Epistle to the Romans about A.D. 59, speaks of Jesus Christ as descended from David according to the flesh (i. 1-4); and this may be due to the fact that one or both of the genealogies had been already compiled. It is more likely, however, that Paul's statement merely indicates the state of feeling out of which they afterwards proceeded. *Isaiah* xi. 1, is the first and original passage which promises to the future King a Davidic descent, and it soon established the belief expounded by the scribes and generally adopted among the people. In referring to the matter at all, Jesus pro-

bably wished to illustrate the confusion of thought involved in the scribes' method of reasoning about divine truths.

This reference to *Psalm* cx. is of course usually taken as a proof that David wrote the Psalm. What it really shows is that the Jews of the time of Jesus believed this Psalm to have been written by David; and Jesus does not criticise this view any more than the corresponding ascription of the Pentateuch to Moses. Modern scholars are not agreed as to the date or origin of the Psalm, but it may safely be said to be very much later than the age of David, and it is probable that it was not written till long after the Exile.

36. In the Holy Spirit, the popular doctrine of the inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures. 'The Lord' is Yahveh, printed in small capitals throughout the Old Testament.

37. The common people always have heard Jesus gladly whenever they have had the chance of hearing him, instead of the later views which men have held about him.

(e) BEWARE OF THE SCRIBES, xii. 38-40.

These three verses are introduced by an expression which implies defective recollection of the occasion when this denunciation of the scribes took place. It was sometime in the course of his teaching in the temple. In *Matthew* these three verses are expanded into the great invective, chap. xxiii.; but critics have long recognised the fact that much of that discourse represents the feeling of the early Christians towards the Scribes and Pharisees rather than the attitude of Jesus himself. Probably Mark gives us most of what

was really remembered as the words of Jesus (comp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 250).

§ 46. xii. 41-44. The Widow's Mites.

[*Luke* xxi. 1-4.]

In the women's fore-court of the Temple stood large receptacles with trumpet-shaped openings for such contributions as pious Jews might wish to make for the support of public worship. The elaborate ritual of the Temple was expensive, and was partly met by this free-will offertory; 'many that were rich cast in much,' and evidently they gave in a way—perhaps throwing in a large quantity of brass coins—which enabled spectators to see how much they were giving. This ostentation, and the popular applause which followed each fresh donation, would strike Jesus as showing a very wrong spirit (*Matt.* vi. 1-4), but he does not here publicly condemn it. What he said, he addressed only to his disciples; he wanted them to understand that there was another and truer way of estimating the worth of such gifts, viz., in accordance with the means of the giver. It is a question, not of the absolute amount, but of the proportion between what we own and what we give. Nor is it merely a question of simple proportion; to give largely out of superfluity is comparatively easy; the gift comes from what we want but little and often secures considerable reward in the shape of fame and influence. But the less we have of anything, the more valuable is it to us. The imprisoned miner who shares a crust of bread

with a comrade is parting with something of incomparably greater value than the thousand-pound subscription of a rich man to a Famine Fund. Here is a fact which forms the basis of a true Theory of Value in Economic Science. It is interesting to find the moral instinct of Jesus taking him straight to the right point of view. He regarded it, as he knew God would regard it, as a question of sacrifice. It is a pity that this principle is not more clearly understood. We often hear people say they will contribute their 'mite' to some cause, when they mean that they will only give a very small subscription.

42. The two mites are mentioned, as they would have made it easier for the widow to put in only half the amount, had she so desired. The farthing was the fourth part of a coin called an as. Ten of these farthings would be worth about one penny of our coinage.

43, 44. Comp. *2 Cor.* viii., especially verse 12, which indicates the same direct religious feeling of the value being proportional to the sacrifice. Paul's collections formed an important feature of his mission among the wealthier Gentiles, and Mark's knowledge of this may have told him that this story of the widow was worth inserting. Luke copies it, but Matthew omits it.

§ 47. xiii. 1-37. An Apocalypse.

[*Matt.* xxiv; xxv. 13-15; x. 17-22. *Luke* xxi. 5-36; xii. 35-41.]

For a full discussion of the contents of this chapter the reader is referred to the *First Three Gospels*, pp. 239-264 and 382-399. Here we have space only to summarise conclusions. During the oppressions of

Antiochus Epiphanes the Book of Daniel appeared (about B.C. 166) and from this time onward, we find a constant stream of a new kind of literature which is properly called, not prophetic, but apocalyptic; its ultimate source is to be found not in the conscience but in the excited imagination playing round certain leading ideas. Most of this literature is excluded from the Bible, but there is one notable example of it in the Book of *Revelation*, or, the Apocalypse, both words meaning an 'unveiling.' It is probable that a much shorter apocalypse, written between 60 and 70 A.D., was extensively circulated among the Christians in Judea at that time, and that it was incorporated in whole or in part in the discourse ascribed to Jesus on the Mount of Olives. There is an obvious reference to this in the phrase 'let him that readeth understand,' verse 14. Such words could not possibly have been spoken by Jesus, and there are many other sayings in the same passage of very doubtful authenticity. But it is all a vivid reflection of early Christian thought and expectation. We have already seen indications of political unrest among the Jews; their feelings were still more excited by a proposal made by the Emperor Caligula in the year 40 A.D. to place his statue in Jerusalem. In 167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes had placed a statue of the Olympian Zeus right in the Temple, and Daniel had called it 'the abomination that maketh desolate' xi. 31 (comp. ix. 27, xii. 11); and, though Caligula's proposal was never carried out, the Jews lived in continual dread of its revival, and from A.D. 40 till their revolt actually broke out in A.D. 66, Jerusalem was continually in a state of more or

less active rebellion. The result of the revolt was the destruction of the Temple in the year 70, and the overthrow of the Jewish national existence. Had Christianity then been no more than a reformed sect of Judaism, it would have shared the same fate; but the leaders of the Church by this time had realised that they must 'launch out into the deep,' that they must gather converts independently of any nationality, proclaiming the Gospel among all peoples, and preparing everywhere a Society of men and women ready to welcome the advent of their Christ. The expectation that the Christ would come before they had had time to go through the cities of Israel (*Matt.* x. 23), had given place to the belief that his appearance was delayed till the Gospel could be preached to all nations (*Mark* xiii. 10). Strong influence was needed to make Jewish Christians feel that they must abandon Judaism to its fate, and verses 14-16 express urgent admonition. The strongest possible support, not only from real faith, but also from what we must call fanaticism, was invoked to sustain the disciples during these days of tribulation, and the final promise is made, most emphatically, that that generation, the men then living, should not pass away till all those things were accomplished, verse 30; 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away,' verse 31. Nevertheless, we know that the early Christians were mistaken, and that their expectation of the return of Christ was never fulfilled.

How far must we regard these words as the words of Jesus himself? That we cannot tell, and we have to learn that it does not greatly matter. Doubtless

Jesus returning to Bethany from Jerusalem did stop on the Mount of Olives and view the Holy City and its magnificent Temple; doubtless his most intimate disciples did press him to tell them what he believed would happen. And we need have little doubt that he did say something expressing his forebodings, his conviction of the direction which events were taking under the hopelessly wrong leadership, both religious and political, that was carrying his nation straight to destruction. On to Peter's genuine recollection of what Jesus said at this place and time, the rest that he did not say would be easily connected. This would be gathered from various sources, the little written Apocalypse and various traditionary sayings, some of which find different occasions in the other Gospels. Thus we have our present composite discourse. It contains two 'notes' in which we seem able to recognise a genuine ring. One is in the promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples when they stand accused before councils, governors and kings. We have seen how all through these days at Jerusalem Jesus waits for a divine impulse before he speaks. This waiting for inspiration is still more evident at his own trial, and it is reasonable to suppose that he enjoined upon his disciples the same course of action which he adopted himself. We hear the second note in the confidence expressed by Jesus that for the faithful all shall come right at last, 'he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved,' verse 13. The wicked shall not be allowed to work their cruel will for ever. God *will* interfere, though none knows when it will be; all must, therefore, 'watch'!

2. The Temple was not thrown down but burnt in A.D. 70, and the stones for the most part left in their original positions. This small discrepancy shows that this prediction did not grow out of the event described, and it is the more likely to be genuine.

4. This question is not answered till verse 32.

6. Comp. *Acts* v. 36, 37; viii. 9-11; xxi. 38. The rising of Theudas took place about 45 A.D.

7. Besides smaller revolts and strifes nearer home, a great imperial war against the Parthians on the Eastern borders of the Roman empire broke out in A.D. 58. Some time had elapsed since then when this was written, and the Christ had not come, 'the end was not yet.'

8. There were great earthquakes in the valley of the Jordan, also at Laodicea in 61, and at Pompeii in 62. *Acts* xi. 28, tells us of a great famine which occurred under Claudius Cæsar, and there was a second great famine under Nero. Comp. *Rev.* vi. 4-viii. 12; also *Hos.* xiii. 13; *Micah* iv. 9, 10; v. 3; *Is.* lxvi. 7-9. *First Three Gospels*, p. 113.

9. Comp. *2 Cor.* xi. 24; *Phil.* i. 13. For closer parallels in regard to the testimony, comp. *Rev.* vi. 9, xi. 7, xii. 11-17. This passage, 9-13, is repeated almost verbatim in *Matt.* x. 17-22; whereas the corresponding section in xxiv. 9-14 shows much greater divergence.

10. In *Rom.* xi. 25, 'the fulness of the Gentiles' conveys a similar thought. The coming of the Christ was delayed to allow time for the Gentiles to be converted.

12. Some of the most bitter wars and most pitiless of persecutions have raged round about Christianity, and members of one family have often been found on different sides.

13. The hatred with which the Jews have been regarded has been intense at many times and places. They were feeling the full brunt of it now from the Romans; and so long as the Christians were regarded as a Jewish sect, which was practically till after the war 66-70, they shared this hate. The Romans really believed the early Christians were guilty of the foulest and most unnatural crimes, and the historian, Tacitus, *Annals* xv. 44,

gives this account of the origin of the Church. 'It had its origin 'from Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius, had been executed 'by the procurator, Pontius Pilate. The deadly superstition, 'though suppressed for a time, broke out again and spread 'not only through Judæa, which was first to suffer from it, but 'though Rome also, the resort which draws to it all that is 'hideous and shameful.' *Seat of Authority*, p. 374.

14. Besides the passages in Daniel quoted above, comp. *1 Macc.* i. 54, vi. 7, as an illustration of the use of this phrase 'abomination of desolation,' to mean a heathen idol. As such it might signify not only the dreaded statue of Caligula but the Eagles, and other military ensigns or standards borne by the Roman legions. Their introduction into Jerusalem by Pontius Pilate in 26 A.D. had caused a display of feeling before which Pilate had had to yield (*Life in Pal.* p. 76, 77). Now, again, about 68 A.D., they were threatening the devoted city. But note that there is no mention here of any siege of Jerusalem or destruction of the Temple. The 'little Apocalypse' was written before A.D. 70. The Christians had been for the most part driven out of Jerusalem by Jewish persecution (*Acts* viii. 1), and were scattered about in the neighbourhood. After the outbreak of the war their leaders withdrew to Pella beyond the Jordan.

19. Paul in *1 Cor.* vii. 26, written about A.D. 58, speaks of 'this present distress' during which it is well for the unmarried to remain single. The date of *1 Thess.* is more doubtful, but ii. 16 may remind us that Josephus, *War*, vi. 9, 3, says that 1,100,000 Jews were slain in the war, and 97,000 taken captive, *Luke* xxi. 24.

20. The elect, literally, 'chosen,' an old prophetic designation of the righteous portion of Israel, *Is.* xlii. 1; xlv. 4, lxv. 9, 22. Paul applies the phrase to the Christian community, *Rom.* viii. 33, (comp. ix. 11, xi. 5, 7, 28) and this usage became general. In this verse the prophetic tone is dropped, and retrospective language used. It may be a gloss.

24-7. Old Testament originals for this description may be found *Is.* xiii. 10; xxiv. 21, 23; xxxiv. 4; *Jer.* iv. 23; *Ezek.*

xxxii. 7, 8; *Joel* ii. 10, iii. 15; *Zeph.* i. 15, 16; *Hagg.* ii. 6, 21. Comp. *Rev.* vi. 12-14. It was part of the scenery of the expected 'day of the Lord.'

26. Comp. *Dan.* vii. 13; also below on *Mark* xiv. 62.

27. **The four winds**, representing the four quarters of the world, *Ezek.* xxxvii. 9; *Dan.* xi. 4. In Mexico, Cortez found the cross used as a religious symbol of the four winds, comp. Reville, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1884, p. 38, 72. Comp. *Deut.* iv. 32, xxx. 4; *Ps.* xix. 6, for similar geographical expression.

29. **These things**, not the portents specified in vv. 24-27, because in 26 the Son of Man is actually seen; the phrase refers back to the tribulation, vv. 14-23, and indicates the intensest strain of expectation.

30. A generation generally meant forty years, but was sometimes extended to one hundred years as the limit of a life time.

31. Comp. *Is.* xl. 8; li. 6. Probably the 'little Apocalypse' ended with this verse.

32-5. Here we seem again to recognise the moral exhortation of the real Jesus telling his disciples that he knows not when the end shall be, and that they cannot know it either, but that they must always be faithful and ready. On **the Son**, see *First Three Gospels*, p. 117.

34. This reads like a summary of the story of the Talents, or is it the original reminiscence afterwards expanded into that Parable?

35-7. Comp. *Luke* xii. 35-46, *Matt.* xxiv. 42-51, for a similar expression of the thought,—the great moral exhortation of the early Church.

DIVISION III. THE PASSION.

§ 48. xiv. 1-11. The Prologue.

[*Matt.* xxvi. 1-16; *Luke* xxii. 1-6.]

The story of the Passion, the last sufferings and death of Jesus, as related by Mark, falls like a drama, into five acts, and the successive phases of the great tragedy may best be borne in mind by distinguishing the localities where the events took place. We have

- I. The Upper Chamber where Jesus and his disciples shared the Last Supper.
- II. Gethsemane.
- III. The Palace of the High Priest.
- IV. The Palace of Pontius Pilate.
- V. Golgotha.

Before entering on the narrative of these events our Gospel gives us a short prologue in which there are three divisions.

(a) Verses 1, 2, The Jewish authorities endeavour to devise the plot to take Jesus by subtilty. We have heard, xii. 12, how 'they sought to lay hold on him; and they feared the multitude.' Now they are still more eager to put an end to his life, but dare do nothing openly. They are under Roman rule; a tumult among the people is the very thing that would bring in the hateful Roman interference (as when Paul was rescued by the chief captain, *Acts* xxi. 27-36); they must proceed according to law; but the first thing is to get Jesus into their hands. For this they have need of treachery; during the day-time

he was surrounded by followers, they must manage somehow to seize him by night.

1. **The passover and the unleavened bread.** On these Feasts see *Life in Pal.* p. 109, sq. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a very old spring festival 'when the first sheaf of early barley was brought in from the field.' To this was prefixed the Passover 'in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt.' This Passover began with the fifteenth day of the month Nisan, *i.e.*, at sunset of what we should call the fourteenth of the month. Taking for convenience sake our names for the days of the week, we may reckon that the Passover began on the Thursday evening, and that this plot of the priests and scribes was on the previous Tuesday.

(*b*) Before narrating the successful execution of the plot through the treachery of Judas, Mark tells us a most touching and characteristic story, verses 3-9, the true meaning of which has not always been understood. This is partly because our account has been more or less confused with the story, placed by Luke in the Galilean ministry, about a woman washing and anointing the feet of Jesus (*Luke vii.* 36-50), and especially because in the corresponding narrative in the Fourth Gospel (*John xii.* 3), it is the feet and not the head of Jesus that are anointed before his death at Bethany. But with these later stories we have nothing to do. If we simply read Mark's account, the meaning is plain enough. This woman determined that Jesus should be the Christ, the Anointed. If there were no others ready to render him this homage, if the rulers were bitterly hostile, the people generally only expectant, the disciples disappointed and alarmed, there was at least one

woman whose faith triumphed over every fear. Peter had first given utterance to the disciples' creed, 'Thou art the Christ.' This woman, now, in this dark hour of doubt and trouble, did the deed, and Jesus was anointed and became the Christ. The disciples' faith had fallen very low, as we can see from their criticisms on her generosity. Had things turned out as they hoped, no sacrifice could have been too costly for such a ceremony; but with everything going wrong, with a Master who would do nothing but preach, with a people daily becoming alienated from a leader who would not lead, with nothing but death and disaster in prospect, it seemed to the disciples simply absurd that this woman should take upon herself to anoint Jesus as the Christ. They utterly refused to recognise any such significance in the act. Nor did Jesus claim that meaning for her deed. With exquisite tact he found another interpretation for what she had done. She must have been bitterly disappointed at their reception of an act which had doubtless cost her no little sacrifice. They can think only of their own disappointment, but he can think of hers; and with the kindest consideration for her feelings, and the truest appreciation of her doing 'what she could,' he silences the murmurs against her conduct, and gives her the promise of a world-wide memorial. Yet Mark tells us not a word of her name or relations or life. We simply know what a woman did.

3. **Simon the leper.** Doubtless this house was the regular lodging of Jesus in Bethany (comp. vi. 10). Simon *may* have been the leper of i. 40-45; in any case it is characteristic

to find Jesus amid such surroundings. **Spikenard**, see R.V., marginal note. 'Nard' is an Indian plant which exudes a fine scented oil, much more costly than the olive oil generally used for the head. *Ps.* xxiii. 5; *Matt.* vi. 17. 'Spike,' *i.e.*, *pistic*, probably means 'genuine,' for there was an imitation article.

5. **Three hundred pence** (denarii), about ten pounds, twelve shillings,* a large sum for a woman presumably poor. And the alabaster vase containing it must also have been costly.

7. Of all the mean uses ever made of the Bible, the meanest is to quote this verse as a reason against trying to help the poor out of their poverty. Jesus is *not* delivering a prophecy for all time, but contrasting the permanent condition of a large portion of his countrymen with his own rapidly approaching death.

8. **For the burying.** Anointing after death and for burial was a general custom, xvi. 1.

9. 'The gospel' a Pauline touch. Was it St. Paul who had heard, and was fond of repeating this beautiful story?

(c) The result of the determination of the Jewish council would probably be to make enquiries among the followers of Jesus with a view to discovering his habits and places of retirement, but Judas is represented, verses 10-11, as going spontaneously to make his offer. The only explanation that can be given of his conduct is that in him the disappointment, felt by all the disciples, reached a climax. It is idle to suppose, as some have done, that Jesus deliberately chose a bad man to be one of his constant companions, one of the Twelve. Judas has become for Christendom a type of the lowest infamy; but it is quite possible that this charge is mistaken, and that in betraying Jesus, his main motive was to force his Master to declare himself, and claim the support alike of Heaven and of his eager countrymen to vindicate his true position. What

actually occurred may never have entered into the anticipations of Judas. This would certainly account for his subsequent remorse. But we cannot say that such a theory is required to account for the remorse. More likely Judas was demanding a sign from heaven. If Jesus, when arrested, received supernatural support, no harm would be done, and Judas would be the first to recognise his Messianic authority. If there was no such sign from heaven, Judas was prepared to admit that he had been deceived, and had been following an impostor. Mark says nothing about a bargain for money; it is the later accounts which give this view with continually increasing emphasis; only covetousness, it was supposed, could have caused such a sin.

10. Judas, the man of Kerioth, a village in Judæa, the only one of the Twelve who came from the south of Palestine. The Galileans held better together.

11. **Money.** No definite sum is mentioned here or was probably known in the earliest tradition. The thirty pieces of silver in *Matt.* xxvi. 15, represent the price of a slave, *Ex.* xxi. 32; but comp. *Zech.* xi. 13, which probably furnished the whole addition to what is contained in Mark.

§ 49. xiv. 12-26. The Passover.¹

[*Matt.* xxvi. 17-30. *Luke* xxi. 7-39.]

It was now Thursday morning, and arrangements were being made through all Jerusalem for the Supper which would be eaten that evening, and which would

¹ Comp. *Life in Palestine*, pp. 109-113.

constitute the most important of all the religious celebrations at this great yearly Festival. Hundreds of thousands of lambs were presented at the Temple, examined and slain by the Levites (*2 Chron.* xxx. 17), and then roasted whole, to be consumed by parties of ten to twenty male Jews (Josephus, *War*, vi. 9-3), the women being excluded from any share in the celebration except that of cleaning all traces of leaven out of the houses in which the festival was held. Rooms in Jerusalem were freely lent, in return for a slight acknowledgment, to parties of provincial Jews. The order of the meal itself was this. First, the head of the party took a cup of wine mixed with water, and having offered over it a prayer of thanksgiving, passed the cup round the company. After this, the paschal table was brought forward bearing the lamb, also a dish of bitter herbs, the 'charoseth' made of pounded fruits, and thin round cakes of unleavened bread. The herbs were dipped in the charoseth and distributed; *Psalms* cxiii. and cxiv. were sung with further thanksgivings; the cup was passed round again; and the bread was broken with thanksgiving, dipped in the charoseth and shared among the company. Next the lamb was eaten. Then 'the wine cup was filled a 'third time; and a special benediction was pronounced 'over it, so that it bore the name of the cup of blessing.' Then came a special thanksgiving for the land of Palestine and for the building of the Temple, a fourth cup of wine was drunk, more hymns were sung (*Psalms* cxv.-cxviii., concluding the group known as the 'Great Hallel' or Praise) and with another prayer the supper and the service ended.

This description of the ordinary celebration of the Passover closely tallies with the account given us in *Mark*, and with the still earlier account given by St. Paul, *1 Cor.* xi. 23-25; but to understand how such a service could pass into our Lord's Supper, we should realise that a somewhat similar rite ushered in every evening sabbath meal. To this day, in Jewish households, the family assembles on Friday evening, and cakes of bread are blessed, broken, and shared; and a blessing is spoken over a cup of wine by the head of the family who then passes it round the circle. It was, therefore, the continually recurring, most familiar, features in the paschal service into which Jesus poured the new meaning of the Christian Communion. In complete accord with this, we have evidence¹ that the earliest celebrations of the Communion Service were attached to the meeting of the brethren for their daily meal, so that it was (in modern phrase) a kind of 'grace' before dinner. Soon, however, the incongruity between the satisfaction of hunger and the associations of the Lord's Supper caused the separation enjoined by Paul; and in the Catholic Church there gradually grew up the dogma which makes the Mass the central never-failing Miracle of that Church. It is believed that a duly ordained priest, by uttering the Latin words *Hoc est corpus meum* 'this is my body,' can effect a miraculous change so that bread is turned into the real flesh of Christ, though the change is concealed from the senses. This transformed bread becomes for those who partake of it, the divinely appointed

¹ *1 Cor.* xi. 17-34.

channel of spiritual grace to the soul.¹ We may well wonder that such a dogma should have grown from such an origin, but our wonder will be diminished by finding its real source not in the words of Christ but in a most ancient, world wide, pagan superstition which connects the acquirement of spiritual qualities with the assimilation of special food. The subject must be studied elsewhere; here we can do no more than indicate the existence of the fact. Jesus did not share this superstition; no one can think so who understands the spirit of his declaration about defilement (vii. 14-23); a man is not defiled, and a man is not ennobled, by what he eats. Jesus was constantly using figurative language in speaking of religious truths. We have dwelt on this aspect of his teaching in connection with the saying about leaven² (viii. 14-21); that misunderstanding was cleared up; this one remains to this day at the heart of the mightiest of the Churches of Christendom. So great is the danger of mistaking the real lines of spiritual causation.

But why, it may be asked, did Jesus connect any religious truth with eating and drinking? Because of the enormous power of the association of ideas. An act which has no spiritual worth in itself, may exercise

¹ 'She was expounding to them a little handbook of the Blessed Sacrament, and her explanations wound up with a close appeal to each one of them to make more use of the means of grace, to surrender themselves more fully to the awful and unspeakable mystery by which the Lord gave them His very flesh to eat, His very blood to drink, so fashioning within them, Communion after Communion, the immortal and incorruptible body which should be theirs in the Resurrection.' *David Grieve*, p. 518.

² Comp. the use of the verb 'to be' in the explanation of the Parable of the Sower, iv. 15-20.

immense influence through the ideas connected with it. Here we part company from the priests and their miracle. Neither priest nor miracle is needed to supplement the most incomprehensible mystery, but the most familiar fact, of the connection between mind and body, matter and spirit, through such association. At this last Supper, Jesus was not thinking of a great Church which should be in existence many centuries after his death. He was thinking of the twelve men then with him in that room, the weak, unspiritual men who had not understood his aims or his methods, who were ready to betray, deny, forsake him. Hitherto they had been able to do little or nothing without him, but soon they would be compelled to act by themselves. His cause must be committed to them, for they were the only men who could carry on the work and prepare for the Kingdom which he knew would come. A dying man often desires to leave a last charge with those to whom he must entrust the interests that were dearest to him during life; and Jesus must have felt that it was *then or never* that he could say something, or do something, to impress his disciples with what he wanted them to remember after he was gone. So it should be his last spiritual gift to connect a thought with a usage for their abiding help. For there are many ways in which actions speak louder than words. Memories are indissolubly united with a custom, with a visible rite. Jesus wished his life and death to be associated in his disciples' minds with this bread and this cup. To them it would be a constant daily reminder of what he had been, of what he had tried to do, of what he wished them to go on trying to do. Such is the

real origin of the Lord's Supper, perverted, like so much else of Christianity, by a pagan superstition into the orthodox dogma of the Catholic Church. We can strip off the pagan superstition, and ask what there may be left for us in a real historical celebration, held purely as a memorial service. Of course, it cannot be to us what it was to the very men who were present in that Upper Chamber; but, nevertheless, it may be associated for us with the holiest and most spiritual feelings which we are able to experience. The very superstitions which degraded it could not kill its own vitality, or wholly impair its power of quickening the spiritual life in those who have sought its aid. Through the darkest eclipse of reason in the middle ages there runs a thread of golden truth which leads us to this last gift of Jesus to his disciples; and, while the weaker and the lower elements may drop out and be forgotten, what we may remember, the feelings which may be associated with the act, may include in our Communion Service everything that is best in Christianity, every truth that has had the closest relation to ourselves and the holiest influence on our lives.

xiv. 12. **The first day of unleavened bread.** See *Num.* xxviii. 16-18. No leavened bread was to be eaten, no leaven allowed in the house, for seven days, beginning with the fourteenth of Nisan; the Passover feast was kept at the beginning of the fifteenth, which fell this year on Thursday evening. Comp. *Exodus* xii. 1-28. The details of the celebration are discussed at great length in the Talmud. There were several variations in the later custom, *e.g.*, they no longer stood to eat, but sat (verse 18), or rather 'reclined.' Also Josephus, *Ant.* ii. 15, 1. **Sacrificed the Passover, i.e.,** killed the lamb in the Temple.

13. These directions somewhat remind us of those given for securing the colt, xi. 1-6. The 'tone' is similar to that of *I Sam.* x. 2, 3, 5, or *Gen.* xxiv. 14, and probably Mark and his readers would regard it as a case of supernatural foresight. The historical fact conveyed is the extreme caution which marks the arrangements now made by Jesus who knew he was in momentary danger of arrest. Only two of his disciples (Luke says Peter and John) are trusted with the secret of the place where the supper is to be eaten. Possibly it was the house mentioned *Acts* xii. 12, and John Mark was the man bearing the pitcher of water.

18. **Betray me.** The caution just noted was due to the conviction of Jesus that he would be betrayed by one of the Twelve. He was keenly conscious of the disappointment felt by his disciples which had produced the murmuring, xiv. 5, and there were doubtless other signs of manner which his quick insight into human nature read only too truly. In our gospel there is no attempt to indicate that any one was specially suspected or pointed out, and here we doubtless have the actual truth. But Judas himself must have known that he was meant. He received a warning and an appeal, but the word fell on a heart too hard to take it in.

20. It would be towards the close of the meal in which all were helped out of a common dish that Jesus spoke of the coming treachery.

21. See *First Three Gospels*, pp. 229, 384. **Goeth, even as it is written.** The writer attempts to show that the Scriptures prophesied the rejection and death of the Christ, comp. p. 120.

22. **Took bread.** Not at the first breaking of bread already described, but after the lamb was eaten, before the cup was passed round and the concluding hymns were sung. **My body.** It is possible to connect these words with the thought expressed by the phrase 'the body of Christ' in St. Paul's writings, *1 Cor.* x. 16, 17; comp. *Rom.* xii. 4, 5; *1 Cor.* xii. 12-27; and, indeed, the whole of this powerful imagery may have been suggested to Paul by the words which

he records in *1 Cor.* xi. 24. But this is rather an after-thought than the original thought. For the real mind of Jesus at this particular moment, we must keep close to the fact that he wanted the men around him to associate him, his life and death, with a familiar, constantly-recurring custom. It is somewhat strange to find Mark omitting the words given us by St. Paul, 'This do in remembrance of me.' Such words are the very heart of the whole matter as an institution founded by Jesus. We have seen enough of Mark's style and frequent omissions to understand that they may really have been spoken though not recorded here, and Paul wrote many years before Mark. On the other hand, if the words were never spoken, still we may say that the injunction was laid upon the disciples, not in express terms, but in the feelings with which they remembered the whole incident. After he had said 'This is my body,' *they* never could break bread together without doing it in remembrance of him; and the apostles wished other disciples to share something of the feelings which were to them such a priceless treasure.

23. And he took a cup, the 'cup of blessing.'

24. **Blood of the covenant.** A reference to thoughts which for Jews were among the most impressive and sublime in the whole of the Old Testament; see *Exodus* xxiv. 8, where the covenant with Israel is ratified with the sprinkling of blood; and then read the grand passage in *Jer.* xxxi. 31-34, when the LORD gives Israel the promise of a new covenant. It was this noblest of prophetic promises that Jesus felt himself called by God to fulfil. His own death should be the offering required as the sacrifice. Mark, in the best MSS., omits the important word 'new,' but we have it in Paul and *Luke*, comp. *Mark* x. 45. **For many.** Jesus knew that his death would not be without result, but had a place in the great providence of God.

25. **I will no more drink.** Jesus, apparently, does not drink of this cup himself; perhaps the meaning of this will appear later. He retains his full faith in the coming of the kingdom of God when all things would be 'new.' The kingdom is likened unto a great supper in *Luke* xiv. 16-24 (*Matt.* xxii. 2-10); comp. *Rev.* xix. 9, 17.

26. Sang a hymn. Jesus and the others probably felt that the final portion of the passover service with its usual thanksgiving for the land and the temple would be inappropriate after what had just taken place, so they sang a hymn (perhaps the remainder of the 'Great Hallel' appointed for the feast, see p. 188), and left the dangerous city for a quiet garden on the Mount of Olives.

§ 50. xiv. 27-31. Peter's Warning.

[*Matt.* xxvi. 31-35; *Luke* xxii. 31-34.]

The story of Peter's denial is wonderfully characteristic of the Gospel narrative. It is the extreme instance of the disciples telling something to their own discredit if it only illustrated the life of their Master. And it does illustrate the insight of Jesus, his power of reading the character of Peter no less than that of Judas. We may feel sure that the warning was given, but forgotten in the horrible agony of mind after the arrest was made and when the trial was actually going on; this forgetfulness is an impressive indication of how unprepared the disciples were in spite of all the efforts of Jesus to strengthen them for the crisis.

27. This is a quotation taken freely from *Zech.* xiii. 7. Jesus may have had this passage in his mind, or its insertion may be due to the desire of disciples to show that their master fulfilled the Scripture prophecies. Comp. ver. 21, note on viii. 29, p. 106.

28. This verse is clearly a mere interpolation, anticipating xvi. 7; the disciples would never have disbelieved the first tidings of the Resurrection if Jesus had now foretold it, and it grossly interrupts Peter's reply in the next verse.

30. **To-day.** The Jewish day, commencing at sunset, had only recently begun. **Before the cock crow twice.** The night was divided into watches by the cock-crow which was given on trumpets, the first at midnight, the second at about 3 a.m. It is more likely that Jesus referred to these definite times than to the actual crowing of a bird.

§ 51. xiv. 32-52. Gethsemane.

[*Matt.* xxvi. 36-56; *Luke* xxii. 40-53].

We have heard on various occasions how Jesus retired for prayer,¹ and renewed his strength by waiting upon God, his Heavenly Father. Here we are allowed to see more closely the nature of this spiritual communion and the way in which it did bring him the needful strength. It has been sometimes asked why Jesus should have felt this great agony if he had long foreseen and foretold his fate, if he knew that his death was needed to consecrate the New Covenant, if his faith never wavered in the coming of the Kingdom of God. In reality, nothing is more natural. But to understand it, we must remember that Jesus had precisely the same kind of knowledge of the future as any other man might have, and not that absolute certainty which we ascribe to divine fore-knowledge. We must also realise how the words with which he palliates his disciples' want of sympathy, describe his own temperament. The spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. We may be sure he had what is now called a nervous, highly

¹ P. 20.

strung organization. He could not sleep, though the disciples could not watch. Death released him from his sufferings long before it usually came to those of coarser mould. Such natures are essentially liable to sudden sharp reaction. The real wonder is that our narrative has not already afforded us more evidence of fits of depression, alternating with the tone of authority and the grand consciousness of bearing to men a message from their God. Hitherto, all forebodings of ill had but served to bring out his faith in God, and to amaze the disciples who followed one going deliberately and resolutely to his doom. Any misgivings, any hour of weakness, had been kept from men, and shown only to God, who had hitherto always given him grace sufficient for his need. But now, just at the last, Jesus would have gladly welcomed the sympathy of human friends as well as the solemn spiritual support of God. Not that his faith in God was really shaken, it was rather because he had such absolute faith in the divine power and the divine love that he could not understand why he was to be crushed and all his work undone. Why should he be given over to the vengeance of cruel enemies, and taken from a movement which so sorely needed his inspiration and guidance? We, after all these centuries, can perceive that Jesus had now accomplished all that was possible in his earthly life, and could carry on his cause most effectually only through his death. But Jesus could have realised this only if he had been far more than man, a Being out of all relation to human conditions. The course of history has been wholly unlike what he expected. He

looked for 'the coming of the Son of Man' in the life-time of his followers. But instead of one generation, sixty have passed away, and yet we seem only at the beginning of the task of preparing the earth for the Kingdom of God.

Under the influence of a sharp physical reaction Jesus broke down when the little company reached Gethsemane, 'and began to be greatly amazed and 'sore troubled.' The word 'amazed' tells us that such a physical collapse was something new to Jesus. It is precisely the condition in which human sympathy can sooth and comfort. Words are not needed, save as the signs of love; neither remonstrance nor reasoning can do any good; all that is wanted is the sense of companionship, brotherhood, and for this Jesus asked and—asked in vain.

But before they fell asleep the three disciples heard some words which indicate to us the whole spirit of that lonely prayer. It is simple, direct, unhesitating communion, the out-pouring of eager desire, but controlled by the conviction, which is the very essence of religion, that it is well for God's Will to prevail whether or not we can make that Will our own. Perhaps this was the first time in his life that Jesus had strongly felt that God's Will was not his will; perhaps it was this new experience that so amazed him, and made his 'soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' It is the deepest sorrow not to be able to accept the Divine Will. Yet that sorrow has already begun to lift when the Will of God is recognised as something better than our will. And gradually the soothing and the comfort which even his chosen

friends were too ignorant or too self-absorbed to give, came to Jesus through his never-failing sense of the Divine Fatherhood.

Nothing in the gospels is more striking than the contrast between the attitude of Jesus on entering Gethsemane, and on quitting it. When the blow has fallen and he is in the grasp of his triumphant enemies, there is no weakness, no asking for sympathy, nothing that is not above pity. He faces his foes with majestic dignity, and dies a death which draws all men to his cross.

32. The Greek says 'an enclosed piece of ground,' an orchard, or garden; Gethsemane means an olive-press, for squeezing out the oil.

33. The same three have been the private companions of Jesus before, v. 37, ix. 2, as the most intimate, the most likely to show loving sympathy.

36. *Abba*, Aramaic for Father, the very word Jesus used (*First Three Gospels*, 288). Comp. Paul in *Rom.* viii. 15, *Gal.* iv. 6. Also *Matt.* vi. 9. For *cup* in this sense, comp. x. 38. The phrase 'cup of salvation' occurs in *Ps.* cxvi. 13, which would be sung at the Paschal Supper. If Jesus refrained from drinking that cup, verses 23-25, it may have been with the feeling that he was not willing to drink this cup which God was offering and which he now prays might be removed.

37. He addresses him as **Simon**, the disciple is not now showing himself the 'rock': see note on iii. 16.

41. **Sleep on now**. There is a touch of sarcasm in these words, but it is very gentle.

42. **Arise**: the sound of a multitude of approaching footsteps is heard: but Jesus makes no attempt to escape.

43. **Judas**. When did Judas leave the rest and go to fetch this force? Judging from Mark, we should infer it was not till Jesus reached Gethsemane and left the nine, while he

went forward with the three. Judas could then slip away unnoticed in the darkness, and he would have had plenty of time to go and bring this armed multitude, probably the Temple-guard, while Jesus was praying and the others sleeping.

44. **Kiss.** Kissing the hand was the usual mode with which a disciple saluted his Rabbi. That Judas should have given it as a token shows how the evil had eaten into his heart.

47. **One of them.** A later tradition says it was Peter (*John* xviii. 10), but in the confusion of the moment it may very well not have been known who it was.

48-50. **As against a robber.** It was an infamous mode of arrest, but doubly successful because the very fact of its succeeding was so inconsistent with the claims of Jesus in the popular estimation.

51-2. In several instances Mark inserts statements which seem unimportant, but these two verses convey an interesting suggestion. Was this young man Mark himself? We have seen that possibly the Supper took place at his parents' house. After the party had left, had he retired to rest; was he roused from sleep by sounds which made him fear this arrest; did he rush forth, hoping to be in time to give warning; was he just too late, and nearly arrested himself; and did he insert this little note in his gospel much as an artist signs his name in an obscure corner of his picture?

§ 52. xiv. 53-72. The Trial before Caiaphas.

[*Matt.* xxvi. 57-75; *Luke* xxii. 54-62.]

Having arrested Jesus, the priests did not lose an hour in bringing him to trial before the Sanhedrin.¹ That body was hastily summoned to the palace of

¹ P. 160. *Life in Pal.* p. 65.

Caiaphas, the high priest, and the legal proceedings began. While all the disciples had fled, and no attempt at any rescue or counter-demonstration seems to have been made, Peter had at least turned back and followed afar off. He even ventured into the court-yard of the palace and sat warming himself by the fire among the officers. From him the account of what took place is doubtless derived. It is evident that the regular legal forms were employed, forms which were just towards the accused, and, in some respects, merciful. The accusers sought for hostile witness, but Mark does not commit the absurdity of saying they sought for 'false' witness,¹ and when witnesses came forward and made false declarations, their evidence was rejected because no two told the same tale. The only definite charge reported is that Jesus had said he would destroy the Temple and in three days 'build another'² made without hands.' This might possibly refer to the time when Jesus foretold the overthrow of the Temple (xiii. 1, 2) and to language which he may have used respecting the human body as a divine Temple. Such language would present a striking coincidence with the words of St. Paul,³ just as the whole accusation is almost identical with that brought against Stephen (*Acts* vi. 14). These coincidences throw some doubt upon the historical accuracy of our report, which may really represent the charge brought against the early Pauline Christians rather than any

¹ *Matt.* xxvi. 59. ² Not 'it' as in *Matt.* xxvi. 61.

³ *1 Cor.* iii. 9, 10, 16, vi. 19; *2 Cor.* vi. 16. *Comp. Seat of Authority*, p. 630.

actual accusation raised against Jesus. However this may be, the whole proceedings threatened to be inconclusive for want of valid witness. Since his brief remonstrance with his captors, Jesus had remained silent; and no doubt his silence, especially when it was directly challenged by the high priest, was more impressive than any speech could be. Again the high priest spoke, this time coming straight to the point, and asking, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' This question tells us two things. First, it tells us that Jesus had never yet publicly claimed to be the Christ. Had he done so, there would certainly have been some ready to testify to having heard him, and this would have been put forward as the ground of accusation. Secondly, it tells us that this was the question which all men had been asking, and which the priests now considered they had settled forever. There can be no doubt that Jesus was thus directly asked at his trial whether he claimed to be the Christ. But doubts have inevitably been felt in regard to the answer which Jesus is reported to have given to this question. The apostles preached, and the evangelists wrote, to prove that Jesus was the Christ; and, even if he had not now claimed that high position, tradition would doubtless have moulded his words into some such form as is recorded. On the other hand, there is very strong reason for believing the substantial correctness of the record. Mark is very simple, direct, and rapid with his 'I am'; and some such confession is obviously needed to account for the scene which follows. Hitherto Jesus seems to have been receiving a fair

trial, remaining himself perfectly silent. He is asked that momentous question ; and the result of his answer is that he is immediately condemned to death as guilty of blasphemy, and is forthwith treated with a cruel insolence, and especially with a mockery, which his captors, his judges and their guard, would hardly have bestowed on anyone whom they did not regard as a wicked, detected impostor. But this is exactly the light in which Jesus would be regarded if he now claimed to be the Christ. It would seem an utterly insane pretension. Jews would accept no Christ without a sign from heaven ; and, instead of any sign of Divine support, here was Jesus a helpless prisoner, betrayed into their hands, deserted by all his followers. And yet it was at this moment that Jesus knew he was the Christ, and knew that it was now his duty to speak out the truth and make the public claim. Never again has the irony of history produced so strange a situation. No wonder that all his judges, some of whom had doubtless inclined to his side in the examination of the witnesses, now condemned him to be worthy of death.

We need not dwell upon the details of the cruel insults which followed. They show the spite which there was, at any rate, in some of the enemies of Jesus. But one form of the mockery already mentioned should be thoroughly understood, and Mark has omitted an essential point which Luke (xxii. 64) supplies. Jesus was blind-folded, and his guards, striking him, mockingly required him to prophesy who gave the blow. He had claimed to be a prophet, and even greater than the prophets, and this insult

seemed to some natures an appropriate refutation of his claims.

Meanwhile Peter was 'beneath in the court.' We do not know the arrangement of the courts and halls in the high priest's palace, but this expression clearly implies that Peter was not present in the room where the trial took place, and can only have heard from others what was going on upstairs. This quite tallies with the account of the trial; it is just what may have been picked up by a disciple eagerly listening to the talk around him, and does not contain the graphic touches which we have frequently found in Mark's narrative where Peter was himself an eye-witness of the event. But though Peter was either unable or afraid to enter the actual scene of the trial, he was near enough to run a great risk of sharing the imprisonment, and perhaps the death of Jesus, if he should be recognised as one of his followers. Of this there was a double chance. As a Galilean his dress and manner would be those of a countryman as distinguished from the townsmen of Jerusalem; and, as soon as he began to speak, his northern dialect, a thick guttural pronunciation, would at once betray his origin. That this should prove sufficient ground on which to charge Peter with being a follower of Jesus indicates how generally the Galilean pilgrims must have supported him. It may seem strange that Peter should have forgotten the warning given him by Jesus, and be suddenly reminded of it when the cock crew; but the fact is impressive testimony to the consternation which overwhelmed the disciples when the arrest

took place. That was something for which they were utterly unprepared; it was a horrible catastrophe which drove all other thoughts out of their heads. But let us remember that when 'they all left him, and fled,' Peter soon recovered himself sufficiently to follow at a distance, and to come near enough to learn what was his master's fate. He was the bravest of the disciples, though he was the one who denied his Lord. We may compare the incident with the one recorded in x. 17-22. In each case a glorious opportunity was thrown away; the terms seemed too hard at the time, and were too hard because the future was unknown; but in after days it looked very different, and what would not Peter have given to have recalled the denial and taken his place as a fellow-prisoner beside his Master! The story can have become known among the disciples only through Peter's own confession; and by confessing it and accepting its shame in bitter penitence, he began a new and devoted discipleship which has made him Primate of the Christian Church.

53. The chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, *i.e.*, the Sanhedrin, see xi. 27.

54. The court, not the hall in which the trial actually took place, which seems to have been upstairs, but a sort of entrance-hall on the ground floor, comp. verse 66. Mark alone mentions the 'warming himself.' Comp. *First Three Gospels*, p. 287.

56. Agreed. At least two witnesses were required, and their testimony must agree sufficiently in detail for them to be a real confirmation of one another, *Num.* xxxv. 30, *Deut.* xvii. 6, xix. 15, *Susanna* 51-61. Comp. verse 59.

58. **Three days**, a proverbial expression for a short space of time. *Comp.* viii. 31. **Made without hands** reminds us of *2 Cor.* v. 1; but it may be said as truly of the human body in this life.

61. **The Blessed**, a late Rabbinical formula for God.

62. **Power**, better 'the Power,' another paraphrase for God. **Clouds of heaven**, *Dan.* vii. 13, but on this whole answer see *First Three Gospels*, pp. 122, 253, 383.

63. **Rent his clothes**, *comp.* *2 Kings* xviii. 37, xix. 1.

64. **Death** was the punishment for blasphemy, *Lev.* xxiv. 16. For an Old Testament trial, *comp.* *Jer.* xxvi.

67. **The Nazarene**, a contemptuous reference to Jesus. The maid may have seen them together.

68. **The Porch**, better 'the forecourt,' within the gates, but outside the main building. The words 'and the cock crew' should be omitted; they are not in the earliest and best MSS., but were added by some transcriber who did not understand 'the second time' in verse 72.

70. **A Galilean**. Peter's very denial made them more suspicious of him because of his local pronunciation.

72. **The second time**, this second cock-crow was sounded on the trumpets at 3 a.m., the beginning of the fourth watch of the night.

§ 53. xv. 1-15. The Trial before Pilate.

[*Matt.* xxvii. 1, 2, 11-26; *Luke* xxiii. 1-5, 9, 10, 13-25.]

The events already described bring us to 3 a.m. on the Friday morning. As soon as the day dawned another formal meeting of the Sanhedrin was held, and Jesus was sent, bound, to be tried for his life by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, with whom lay the sole power of condemning a prisoner to death. Mark does not directly tell us what were the terms of

accusation, but Pilate's question 'Art thou the king of the Jews?' shows us plainly what the priests tried to do. They knew that Pilate would care little for the charge of blasphemy; nor, to his Gentile mind, would there be any proof that Jesus had committed blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of the Blessed. But there was another side to the whole Messianic movement and the popular expectations connected with the Christ, viz., the political side. Nothing could be falser than to accuse Jesus of having fostered a political rebellion against Roman authority. This was exactly what he had not done; and his refusal to do so was the reason why he was now a helpless prisoner in the hands of the priests. Nevertheless, this was the accusation that would weigh with Pilate; and he is, therefore, told that Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews. Many accusations were brought forward by the priests, and again Jesus answered his accusers with the same impressive silence. We are told 'that Pilate marvelled;'; it is the same note of astonishment, the sense of coming in contact with a unique personality, which we have heard through this gospel from the beginning. And the Roman governor was shrewd enough to see the hollowness of the charge. Had Jesus really been dangerous as a political rebel, Pilate would have heard of it from some other quarter, not from these priests. But though he understood the situation, he treated it with the levity of a military official; he thought it mattered very little what became of Jesus; and it seems as if suddenly an idea struck him, to which without a moment's consideration he gave utterance. It was

a custom at this Paschal Festival to release a prisoner, anyone whom the people chose to ask for. Some of these have reminded Pilate of this custom ; and he at once asks them if they will take Jesus, and so save him all further trouble. Of course, such a proposition pleased nobody. The crowd wanted a certain Barabbas, a man who had done some real fighting against the Roman authority. It was easy for the priests to stir up the multitude against Jesus when it appeared that his release would involve the detention, and presumably the execution, of Barabbas. There was no longer any question of the guilt or innocence of Jesus. This guilt had been assumed when Pilate offered to set him free as a favour to the people. Still, Pilate makes another effort to find out what evil Jesus had really done. But the crowd are in a bloodthirsty, cruel temper ; they regard Jesus as a detected impostor, a convicted blasphemer, they are enraged at the thought that through him they might have lost Barabbas. Barabbas is their choice, let Jesus be crucified ! And Pilate, whose main care as a Roman official was to prevent any popular tumult, is willing to content the multitude and gives the order for the crucifixion.

1. **Pontius Pilate** was appointed Roman Governor in A.D. 26, and remained in office ten years, so that the crucifixion cannot be later than A.D. 36. In A.D. 6, Judæa and Samaria were incorporated in the Roman province of Syria under an official whose proper title was procurator. Pilate was the fifth who held this office. He usually lived at Cæsarea ; but there was a strong fortress garrisoned by his troops in Jerusalem, and at the time of the Passover he moved thither to be ready to exercise any needful control. *Comp. Life in Pal.* pp. 75-79.

2. **Thou sayest** does not sound to us like a very explicit answer, such as Jesus made in xiv. 62. In *Matt.* xxvi. 64, however, Jesus replies to the high priest, 'Thou hast said, while the corresponding passage in *Luke* xxii. 70, reads, 'Ye say that I am,' or 'Ye say it, because I am.' There is some Rabbinical evidence that this phrase was equivalent to 'yes,' and it seems to be taken as such by the evangelists. But we should have been glad of clearer evidence that it would be so understood by Pilate; and it is plain that if the reply now made by Jesus was not a direct claim to be king of the Jews, but only an admission that others called him so, it might very easily have passed into the form in which we find it in all three Synoptics, and have been interpreted by them as a direct affirmation

3. **Many things**, including probably breaking their law in regard to the Sabbath and other ritual observances. (*Comp.* ii.-iii. 6, vii. 1-23.) But the accusers would be most anxious to twist what Jesus had said about paying tribute to Cæsar (xii. 13-17) into a charge to which Pilate would listen.

5. **Marvelled**. *Comp.* i. 22, v. 20, 42, vi. 2, 51, vii. 37, x. 24, 26, xi. 18, xii. 17.

6. We have no other direct evidence of the existence of this custom, but we have indirect confirmation in the fact mentioned by Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 9, 3, that on a similar occasion some robbers obtained from Albinus the release of ten of their companions; see Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, vi. p. 94. Such a practice would be striking testimony to the gulf between the government and the people.

7. **Barabbas**, meaning 'son of the Father,' for Abbas is only a Greek form of 'Abba' (xiv. 36, *Rom.* viii. 15). It appears from some ancient authorities that his full name as given in *Matt.* xxvii. 17, was Jesus Barabbas, a name and meaning which afford a strange coincidence with the name and function of Jesus of Nazareth. We do not know the occasion of the insurrection, but such disturbances were constantly occurring, and it may have been the same as that referred to in *Luke* xiii. 1.

8. **Went up.** Probably a crowd of the friends of Barabbas hearing that Pilate is, as we should say, 'on the bench,' enter the court and make their demand.

10. Pilate had had some experience of actual rebels, and could see how different was the character of Jesus. **Envy,** they were jealous of his popular influence.

11. **Stirred up the multitude,** so that after this there is no reasoning, no legal prosecution, nothing but raging passion.

15. Punishment in those days was exceedingly cruel. It was not considered nearly enough to condemn a criminal to death; he must be tortured to death; and the process began immediately judgment was given. The contrast between this and modern capital punishment is worth noting.

§ 54. xv. 16-41. **The Crucifixion.**

[*Matt.* xxvii. 27-56; *Luke* xxiii. 11, 12, 26-49].

In this account of the crucifixion two features are prominent: (1) the cruelty and the shame; and (2) the opportunity it afforded for a last mocking demand for a sign. We need not dwell at length upon the brutality of the executioners, though it would be wrong altogether to ignore this terrible side of human nature. When the soldiers ridiculed Jesus, they were jeering at a man who had just been scourged, and who was about to be tortured to death upon the cross. Yet these men were not fiends, they were human animals. In all gregarious animals there exists an impulse to trample, gore, or peck to death a sick or wounded companion. The sight of a comrade in misery, so far from exciting any feeling of pity, arouses a feeling of rage and the impulse.

to destroy. The general tendency of this instinct is doubtless to shorten suffering among the brute creation as well as to promote nature's law of the survival of the fittest.¹ But where this instinct enters the field of conscious human nature, and is not destroyed by the pity which is the mark of real humanity, it develops a horrible delight in inflicting pain and watching its endurance. There have been times when this passion has broken loose and revelled in wild orgies of cruelty. The end of the Roman republic and earlier years of the empire were such a season, and furnished the conditions under which Christian martyrs bore their testimony. Jesus was to be their leader, and divine providence must let him suffer as well as die.

We should also try to realise how intensely characteristic was this final demand for a sign. It had confronted Jesus in the midst of his career, forced on the crisis, secured his condemnation, and now mocked him on the very cross. But it has done worse than that: it has polluted the pure religion in every account we have of his life and teaching. We can best judge of its strength by the extent to which it has coloured the Gospel narratives, by the growing tendency in the later Gospels to treat miracles as evidence, and by the fact that the Catholic Church still claims the power to work miracles as its main credentials, and that only a small fraction of Protestantism has ceased to regard acceptance of the miracles recorded in the Bible as essential to Christian faith. But if miracles are the sign from heaven, the Jews were justified in

¹. See Miss Cobbe, *Theological Review*, Jan. 1874.

asking that Jesus should come down from the cross before they could believe him to be the Christ.

16. **The court**; the strong tower of Antonia, right opposite the temple, was garrisoned with Roman soldiers (*Acts* xxi. 31-34) and may be the Prætorium (which is a Latin word meaning 'barracks,' comp. *Philip.* i. 13) meant here; or it may be the palace of Herod the Great to which Pilate moved up from Cæsarea with a military reinforcement during the season of the passover. **The whole band.** A Roman cohort was about six hundred men, a tenth of a legion; but the word may mean a 'maniple,' of which there were three to a cohort.

17. **Purple**, more probably scarlet, as in *Matt.* xxvii. 28; *i.e.*, a 'sagum,' the soldiers' ordinary red cloak, but it would represent the purple robe of a king. **Crown of thorns.** The *Lycium spinosum* is common at Jerusalem, and has prickly, hard, and tough twigs, such as could be readily woven into a wreath.

18. **King of the Jews**, comp. verses 2, 9; further evidence that this was the real charge on which Jesus was brought before Pilate.

20. **Lead him out**; derision of any Jew in public was strictly forbidden to the soldiery, Josephus, *Jewish War*, ii. 12, 1, so they restore to him his own garments when the procession is ready to start for the place of execution, which was always outside the city; for Jewish custom, see *Levit.* xxiv. 14; *Deut.* xxii. 24, *1 Kings* xxi. 13, *Acts* vii. 58, *Heb.* xiii. 12, Josephus, *Antiquities*, iv. 8, 24, *Jewish War*, iv. 6, 1. Comp. Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, vi. 127, for evidence of Roman usage.

21. **Compel**, or 'impress,' forced service is a common incident under despotic government; comp. *Matt.* v. 41. Cyrene was a town in north Africa where many Jews were settled; comp. *Acts* vi. 9. Simon and his sons are spoken of here as persons likely to be known to the readers of the Gospel. An Alexander is mentioned *Acts* xix. 33, *1 Tim.* i. 20,

but comp. *2 Tim.* ii. 17, and a Rufus, 'the chosen in the Lord,' *Rom.* xvi. 13. **From the Country.** This has been supposed to indicate that he had been at work in the fields, and that consequently the day could not be one which was kept as a Sabbath, but neither inference is sound. In xvi. 12, two of the disciples walk into the country, comp. *Luke* xxiv. 13-35, and this certainly does not mean 'go to work in the fields.' **Bear his cross.** The physical suffering endured by Jesus probably reduced him to a state of exhaustion which delayed the procession. The upright portion of the cross was usually fixed in the ground before the executioners arrived on the spot, and this would be part of the preparation for which they waited before setting out after Pilate's sentence. It was the cross-piece that the criminal was condemned to carry as a degrading addition to his punishment. Sometimes it took the form of a forked yoke to which his hands were bound before starting, and the whole proceeding was made as painful and ignominious as possible, but this Jesus seems to have been spared.

22. **The place Golgotha.** Many attempts have been made to identify this place. The locality named by tradition is universally rejected by scholars as almost certainly within the ancient city wall. It represents the spot shown to Constantine, and the sham miracles by which he was convinced that he had discovered the site of the true cross; and it is still the place where Mahomedan guards keep rival Christians from fighting one another. The real Golgotha may be a small hill to the north of Jerusalem, known as containing 'Jeremiah's grotto,' not far from the Damascus gate, but fortunately there is no certainty in the matter. It received its name from some resemblance, real or fancied, to a skull, not because bones were allowed to lie about there, which would not be the case.

23. **Wine mingled with myrrh.** This would be offered out of kindness in strange contrast to the rest of the proceedings. It was an intoxicating drink, prepared by some of the ladies of Jerusalem, and given to criminals to stupify

them and deaden the sense of pain; comp. *Prov.* xxxi. 6, 7. Jesus prefers to endure the pain and retain full possession of his faculties. *First Three Gospels*, p. 92.

24. Crucify him. The victim was stripped of his garments, and his two hands nailed to the crosspiece so as to extend the arms at full length. He was then raised and hung a little distance from the ground on the upright post, the weight of the body being partly supported on a projecting peg; the feet also were nailed or bound with cords to the post. No great loss of blood would be thus caused, and the succeeding torture would be chiefly due to the constrained, unnatural attitude, and consequent impeded circulation in the limbs, which, in turn, would overcharge the vessels of the brain and about the heart, and cause an agony of pain. But victims generally survived from thirty-six hours to three days and sometimes died of starvation. Cicero (*Against Verres* B.C. 70) speaks of such an execution as not only illegal for any Roman citizen to suffer, but as too horrible for any Roman citizen to see; but when Titus, A.D. 70, was besieging Jerusalem, he crucified Jewish prisoners round the walls till wood could no longer be found for crosses. **Casting lots.** There would be only two principal garments, and these might be of unequal value. Most of the soldiers would return to their barracks, leaving probably four to guard against any attempt at a rescue, and these four, according to custom, would share the garments among themselves.

25. Third hour, between nine and ten a.m.

26. Superscription. The description of the crime was generally written on a white placard and borne with the cross to the place of execution. Here it was, of course, meant to be ironical. The statement that it 'was written over' is evidence for the shape of the cross, viz., that the upright post projected beyond the transverse arms. More frequently it merely resembled a T. It is worth noting that this superscription is given in all four gospels, and differently in each. *Mark's* form is the shortest, 'The king of the Jews.' *Luke* reads: 'This is the king of the Jews'; *Matthew*: 'This is Jesus the king of

the Jews'; and *John*: 'Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.' These discrepancies are an absolute refutation of the theory of verbal inspiration. Even *John's* statement that the superscription was in three different languages will not account for four different versions.

27. Two robbers. These were the pest of the land, and may have been condemned for some time and kept to be executed at this festival. This historical incident was afterwards seized on as fulfilment of a prophecy for which *Luke* xxii. 37 has found another connection. Hence the insertion of verse 28 in 'many ancient authorities,' R.V. marg. Comp. *First Three Gospels*, pp. 92, 3.

29. They that passed by. Friends dare not draw near, and this phrase does not suggest any great crowd of enemies; a few of the most implacable probably came out to gloat over the scene; and there is little doubt that the place was near one of the main roads leading out of Jerusalem, and a certain amount of traffic would pass along that way. We can hardly have a better illustration of the difficulty which common minds have to grasp spiritual truth than that this saying of Jesus about destroying and rebuilding the temple (p. 201) should now be used against him in mockery.

31. Some of the chief priests have also come out to gloat, though they keep themselves apart in a little group with the scribes. Perhaps what they saw made them anxious to reassure themselves that they were right. **He saved others, himself he cannot save.** We want no better words to express the spirit of the life of Jesus. Contrast them with the phrase 'a man must live' when used in defence of some dastardly act.

32. See and believe; comp. *John* xx. 29, which is at least an attempt to indicate that religious belief must rest upon something other than sight. **Reproached him,** this from his fellow-victims completes the desolation of the whole scene. Yet these men in their misery may be excused for thinking that, if Jesus could save them, he ought to do so, and some perception of this may have originated the story of 'the penitent thief.' *Luke* xxiii. 40-43.

33. **Darkness.** No eclipse of the sun (comp. *Luke* xxiii. 45) was possible at the time of full moon when the passover was always held. It is doubtful whether the writer conceived the darkness as extending over the whole 'land' or the whole 'earth,' either meaning being possible. The story is the poetic expression of the belief that nature would thus express her reprobation of the deed. Comp. *Ex.* x. 22, *Joel* ii. 10, 31, iii. 15, *Is.* xiii. 10, l. 3, *Fer.* xv. 9, *Job* ix. 7, *Amos* viii. 9. Classical writers in the same way reported a similar darkness at the death of Cæsar, and again of Augustus.

34. **Ninth hour.** Jesus has been nearly six hours on the cross; Mark's indications of time are precise and consistent, and such as a spectator even at some little distance may well have noted. Jesus now utters the only words which our earliest Gospel records him to have spoken from the cross. They are given, like some other sayings where tradition seems authentic (v. 41, vii. 34, xiv. 36), in the original Aramaic language, with an interpretation added in Greek. They are a quotation from a Psalm (xxii. 1) which would certainly be familiar to Jesus; and after reading verses 7, 8, 16-18, we can understand how what actually had occurred might recall them to his mind. The words are of very high value to us as an indication of the mind of Jesus. They show that to the last he could not understand *why* he had been deserted and allowed to be crushed. He would feel that he had been forsaken by God, and could see no reason why he should suffer all this ignominy and agony; it is the cry of a real man wrung from him in his last extremity, just before death came to release him. After death, the reason why would be shown to him, as it has been made clear to us. Another explanation is, however, possible. The anguish of the persecuted sufferer of *Ps.* xxii. turns into triumphant faith at the close of the poem. In uttering the opening verse, Jesus may have intended to express also his confidence that the kingdom was still God's, and that the divine righteousness should be declared throughout the world (verses 27-31).

35. **Them that stood by,** not necessarily the soldiers,

who were probably ignorant of Jewish religious expectation but some of those mentioned in the note on verse 29. They caught the words which sounded like a cry for Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, and a last hope of seeing a miracle leaped up in their minds, and they hurry to give Jesus some stimulant lest he should die first.

36. **Vinegar**, the acid wine which formed the ordinary drink of the common soldier, called *posca*.

37. **A loud voice**. Probably some blood-vessel gave way under the strain described in the note on verse 24, and as unconsciousness ensued, an inarticulate cry succeeded the silence which the conscious spirit had kept so long. **Ghost**, an old English word meaning the same as spirit. There is only the one Greek word '*pneuma*' which is translated sometimes by one term, sometimes by the other. Give or yield up the ghost is a Biblical phrase for dying; *Gen.* xlix. 33, *Job* x. 18, xiv. 10, *Jer.* xv. 9, *Acts* v. 10.

38. **Veil of the temple**, the great curtain which hung in front of the Holy of Holies separating it from the Holy place (pp. 151, 152). As the darkness, verse 33, represented the protest of nature, so the report of this incident would grow out of the feeling that true religion disavowed the deed. Or there may be a more definite meaning in the symbol. In the Pauline theology the death of Jesus was the means through which the power of the old law was done away, and free access was opened for Gentile as well as Jew to the mercy of God, comp. *Eph.* ii. 14, 18, iii. 12. So when he died, the veil of the temple was rent, and the approach to the innermost sanctuary was made possible to all. In the Gospel according to the Hebrews we have the later tradition that the huge stone lintel over the door of the temple was now shattered. *First Three Gospels*, p. 350.

39. **The Son of God**, more correctly, marg. R.V., 'a son of God,' which in the mouth of a Roman centurion would mean 'a hero'; it would be an expression of rough admiration extorted by the way Jesus had borne his sufferings to the end. There is, however, some difficulty in the use of a regular

Jewish phrase by a Gentile centurion: *Luke* xxiii. 47 has 'a righteous man.'

40. **Women beholding from afar:** these may have run less risk of arrest than men; but here is the fact that the earliest account represents only women as the friends who ventured near enough to be mentioned. Mary Magdalene is not mentioned earlier in the Gospel narrative, but tradition, starting from *Luke* viii. 2, comp. *Mark* xvi. 9, has identified her with the woman in *Luke* vii. 37-50. James the less, to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (the sons of Zebedee); and also from James, the Lord's brother, *Gal.* i. 19. Jesus is called the brother of James and Joses, *Mark* vi. 3, but it is impossible to believe that the mother of Jesus would be here described as the mother of James the less and Joses. An altogether different family from vi. 3 may be indicated here. In the place of Salome, *Matt.* xxvii. 56 says 'the mother of the sons of Zebedee,' no doubt meaning the same woman.

41. **Ministered unto him,** a most interesting indication of how the missionary work in Galilee was supported. So in *Luke* viii. 3.

DIVISION IV. (XV. 42-XVI. 20.) AFTER DEATH.

§ 55. xv. 42-47. **The Burial.**

The Gospel narratives do not end with the death of Jesus, but contain additional matter of the greatest importance. We look here to find the explanation of a fact which has revolutionised the history of the world. The last view we had of the disciples was of disappointed, false, panic-stricken men, betraying, deserting, denying, their Master. A few years after this, we find most of these men at the head of the early Christian Church, faithfully carrying on the work begun by Jesus, the leaders of a movement

which rapidly grew and spread, and for which men and women toiled and suffered with unparalleled religious zeal and fidelity. What caused this mighty change? The answer to this question given by the Church is 'The Resurrection.' But this answer, so far from being a real explanation, itself involves many new and most difficult problems.

We are not here dealing with the history of the Christian Church, and cannot discuss the phases of belief through which it has had to pass. Nor have we space to touch upon the thoughts suggested by the narratives in the later Gospels. They will be treated elsewhere. What we have to do, and it is worth doing carefully, is to note and study the contribution afforded by the account given in these earliest records of the life of Jesus.

In this section, dealing with the burial, there is no mention of any of the well-known male disciples. It is a man in a very different position, whose rank gave him easy access to Pilate, and who was not afraid that his conduct might be misinterpreted, who secured the burial of the body of Jesus.

42. Even was now come. It was close on sunset when the Sabbath began; and if the body of Jesus was to be buried first, *Deut.* xxi. 23, it must be done at once. Often the body was allowed to rot to pieces on the cross.

43. Joseph of Arimathæa, or Ramah in Ephraim, *1 Macc.* xi. 34; he was a member of the Sanhedrin (p. 160), **Boldly**, one of Mark's vivid touches; it required some boldness to show this amount of interest in the crucified Jesus. He is not mentioned elsewhere except in the corresponding passages in the other Gospels.

44. Already dead. See note on verses 24, 34.

45. **Granted.** After an execution it was not unusual to *sell* the corpse to friends who wished to bury it. Pilate is gracious and gives it.

46. **Tombs** were frequently hewn out of the rock, especially for bodies which were intended to be embalmed, and so await the general resurrection believed in by those who were 'looking for the kingdom of God.' There was no time now to do more than take down the body, wrap it in a linen cloth, lay it in the tomb, and close the door with a heavy stone. The last measure would be specially intended as a precaution against the prowling dogs, and possibly other animals, that might stray round at night. What was said about the site of the cross applies still more strongly to the place of the sepulchre. The traditional site represents the supposed discovery made by Constantine, and real evidence there is none.

47. These witnesses are mentioned with a view to the statement in the next chapter. We have Paul's attestation of the burial in *1 Cor.* xv. 4, *Rom.* vi. 4.

§ 56. xvi. 1-8. The Empty Grave.

With the words of this section we reach the end of the real Gospel according to Mark. There are two appendices which we shall have briefly to consider, but it is a point of deep interest that the Gospel with which we have been hitherto dealing ends in the earliest and best manuscripts with verse 8. Mark bears witness to the empty grave, but tells no more. Writing as he did, thirty or forty years after the event, he must have known of the existence of many stories of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples; we may be certain of this from the words of St. Paul in *1 Cor.* xv. 1-8; but he does not narrate a single one.

Two reasons may be assigned for this silence. (1) He may have considered that he had reached the most fitting conclusion of his narrative when he had finished the account of everything important which took place at Jerusalem, and the appearances recorded by St. Paul unquestionably took place in Galilee; but he would hardly have thought this, if he had found in his time any firmly settled tradition respecting appearances of Jesus leading up to a final conclusion in an account of the Ascension; and he could not possibly have adopted this reason for stopping where he does, if he had known that many of these appearances were located on satisfactory evidence at or near Jerusalem, which is the statement we meet in later Gospels. (2) The alternative is to suppose that he stopped writing when he had told his readers all for which he could find good evidence. This inference from Mark's silence is confirmed by the mutual inconsistencies of the later accounts. A third possibility has, however, been suggested, viz., that the original close of the Gospel was accidentally lost, through the disappearance of its last leaf or leaves. There is no direct evidence for this conjecture, but it cannot be pronounced impossible; it would explain the extraordinary abruptness of the present ending with the Greek word *gar*, 'for'; and it would account for the fact that it was afterwards found necessary to supply another conclusion. Compare note on verse 8.

1. **The Sabbath** would end at sunset on the Saturday; it would be possible then to buy spices, but daylight would be wanted for going out to the tomb to anoint the body. This

was a wide-spread ancient custom, brought to perfection in Egypt.

The names of these three women are an important link connecting this section with the preceding, and that again with the story of the crucifixion; down to the end of verse 8, it is plainly all one narrative.

2. Mark's account is eminently consistent with probability. The women would be anxious to take the first moment when daylight would permit them to begin their work on the corpse. This would be Sunday morning, then, as now, the first day of the week.

3. Roll us away the stone. A vivid touch, characteristic of Mark; so, too, is a certain confusion of order in this and the next verses. He is in so great a hurry to mention that the women found the stone rolled back that he first states what they saw, and then gives the reason, 'for it was exceeding great,' why the women asked their question, comp. x. 32. There is historical significance in the question as showing that the women had no men to help them. The rest of the disciples are evidently not 'close at hand.'

5. Entering into the tomb, not into a grave dug in the ground, but a cave hewn out of the rock on the hill-side. A young man. Probably Mark would mean his readers to understand that this young man was really an angel (comp. verse 6), the form corresponding to that usually taken by such appearances; but with his usual sobriety of statement he simply says what the women actually saw. His words have given rise to the supposition that some of the disciples of Jesus had come and removed the body. This is quite possible. They may have wondered whether he could be really dead, or they may have had an overwhelming desire to look once again upon the features of him whom they deeply loved. This desire would be the more intense as the feeling of shame over their cowardly desertion of him was awakened. Nor is it difficult to conjecture reasons why they might next wish to remove the body. They may have seen their Master rouse an apparently dead girl and bring her

back to life (v. 41); they may have heard still more wonderful stories of resuscitation, and wished to try now what they could do. And if, as we may suppose, their efforts were futile, they probably said little more about what they had done, though in *Matt.* xxvii. 62-66; xxviii. 11-15, we may have a later story growing out of this basis of fact. All this, however, is pure conjecture, and its only value is to show that there is no difficulty in our accepting the 'empty grave,' as a real historical fact, which would, in turn, serve as an important starting point for the development of the later stories connected with the resurrection. If it be thought that these later stories could not have arisen if the immediate disciples of Jesus had acted in the way here suggested, it is easy to fall back upon Joseph of Arimathæa, and other friends of Jesus, belonging perhaps to Bethany.

6. **Jesus the Nazarene**, the very words used by the maid who charged Peter with being a follower of Jesus xiv. 67; they do not give the name we should expect to hear from the lips of an angel, but might very well come from the mouth of a servant of Joseph of Arimathæa. Can we believe that this young man, whoever he was, spoke the words **he is risen** and, if so, must we proceed further to find a rationalistic explanation of this? Conjectures here are easy to make, but very unprofitable. Moreover, the whole of verses 6 and 7 are hard to reconcile with the main statement in verse 8 which bears all the tokens of authenticity. These women who fled trembling and astonished, and were afraid to say anything to any one, can hardly have heard and remembered and correctly repeated the definite and most cheering tidings here recorded. On the other hand, such words are precisely what would naturally be reflected back on this crisis from the time, a few years, or, may be, only months later, when the belief in the resurrection was taking shape.

7. **Galilee**, this word indicates an important fact. After the crucifixion the male disciples undoubtedly returned immediately to Galilee. They had nothing to keep them at Jerusalem, and every reason for escaping from its dangers to

their own homes. Probably they began this flight the very day that Jesus died, since we find Joseph of Arimathæa and these women doing the work which they would naturally have performed had they been present (*Matt.* xiv. 12). They would flee scattered for safety's sake, and not re-unite till they reached Galilee. It was there that they again gathered together, and amid the scenes consecrated to them by the memories of their Master's presence, they again found him, in some higher sense, in the midst of them. Only in Galilee could the 'five hundred brethren' of *1 Cor.* xv. 6, have been collected together at this early date. **As he said unto you.** We have in Mark's real Gospel no record of Jesus having promised the disciples they should see him in Galilee after his death; and, to remedy the deficiency, some copyist inserted the obvious gloss, xiv. 28. *First Three Gospels*, 320.

8. A last vivid description of this most picturesque writer. It is an abrupt unsatisfying conclusion urgently demanding further and fuller tidings to satisfy the curiosity it excites; and here again, is a characteristic of Mark which we have noted more than once elsewhere. When he wrote this verse, the missionary preachers of Christ had long been prepared to satisfy this curiosity with their gospel of the resurrection. But the stories they told obviously differed much from one another, and formed no clear consistent tradition such as Mark had followed down to this point. He may have added some further verses which were early lost from the end of his manuscript. What we should have expected from him (see Introduction), would have been some account of that first appearance to Cephas, *1 Cor.* xv. 5. But he may have felt that such a narrative was the opening of a new work rather than the close of what he had already written. When he wrote, he was living in constant expectation of a further appearance of Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts concludes with a similar abruptness explicable by this mental attitude of expectation. To such a state of mind, all that had happened seemed to derive its whole importance as a prelude to something that was daily and hourly expected. Writers

in that mood would wait to give the real completion of their story after the events they narrated had led up to the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth; and the full truth could be learned and made known among those who would be re-united in that Kingdom.

§ 57. The Epilogue (a.)

We need feel no surprise that the early Church found it impossible to leave the Gospel according to Mark with no other ending than the verse we have last considered. The missionaries of Christianity preached a risen Christ, and would be unwilling to place in the hands of any convert a life of Jesus which did not convey a distinct statement of his resurrection. Whether Mark really stopped with the eighth verse or whether he wrote a conclusion that was early lost from the end of his MS., something further was required. Two different appendices were accordingly written, neither of which are found in the oldest and best MSS.; but among later MSS., some have the one ending, some the other; and ultimately the shorter appendix was generally rejected and the longer appendix passed into the Received Text and our Authorised Version.

The shorter appendix may be the earlier of the two. It is as follows:

‘And all that had been enjoined on them they reported briefly to the companions of Peter. And after these things Jesus himself from the East even to the West sent forth by them the holy and incorruptible preaching of eternal salvation.’

The first of these two sentences reads almost like a contradiction of verse 8. At any rate, no author would write the one directly after the other, and this of itself prevents our supposing that we have here the genuine ending of *Mark*.

The companions of Peter is a Greek idiom which might be translated 'Peter and his companions.' The second sentence belongs to a time when the early Church was full of the most ardent and successful missionary activity, conscious of bearing an offer of eternal salvation, convinced that it was Jesus himself who sent forth the great company of preachers.

§ 58. xvi. 9-20. The Epilogue (b).

This sequel has evidently been written to bring Mark's narrative into harmony with the other three Gospels and the Book of Acts. Here we have the account of appearances of the risen Jesus; (1) to Mary Magdalene, (2) to two of the disciples, (3) to the eleven. The whole passage is practically compiled from other statements in the New Testament as noted below; if it contains anything of historical value, it is in the admission that the disciples received the first tidings of these appearances with incredulity. This is a fact of real importance, strongly attested in the other Gospels, and it is evidence that Jesus never foretold his resurrection in any way which led his disciples actually to expect its occurrence.

9. Founded on *John* xx. 14-17, with a reminiscence of *Luke* viii. 2. Comp. *First Three Gospels*, pp. 68, 273.

10. *John* xx. 18; comp. *Luke* xxiv. 9, 10, *Matt.* xxviii. 8.

11. *Luke* xxiv. 11, 17, 23.

12. Comp. *Luke* xxiv. 13-31, the journey to Emmaus.

13. Comp. *Luke* xxiv. 33-35, 37, 41; but note that *Mark*

gives a different turn to the conclusion, comp. *Luke* xxiv. 34. Is it possible that there was another version of the Emmaus story?

14. *Matt.* xxviii. 17, where we have the remarkable statement that some doubted even among those who saw the risen Jesus. **Sat at meat**, see *Acts* i. 4 (Margin R.V.). **Up-braided**, *Luke* xxiv. 25, 36-43, *John* xx. 27.

15. *Matt.* xxviii. 19, *Luke* xxiv. 47.

16. The omission of the direct command to baptise is not what we should expect, but its place is supplied by an announcement concerning belief and baptism, which indicates the growth of the ecclesiastical idea of the importance of belief as a condition requisite for salvation. Comp. *Acts* xvi. 31.

17, 18. There is not a word to indicate that **these signs** shall not be the permanent accompaniment of belief: and, accordingly, fanatics are still to be found who drink poison and handle venomous serpents in the faith that their belief will save them. The moral responsibility for their death really rests on those who teach a view of inspiration which can lead to such folly. Most professed 'believers' would, however, shrink from this application of their principle, and the verses are worth remembering as a test of the theory of verbal inspiration. **Tongues**, comp. *Acts* ii. 4, x. 46, xix. 6; **serpents**, *Acts* xxviii. 3-6; **drink**, Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.* iii. 39, 9, relates this of Joseph Barsabbas, *Acts* i. 23; **the sick**, *Acts* xxviii. 8, 9, comp. *1 Cor.* xii. 9.

19. **The Lord Jesus**, a phrase never used in the real *Mark*. **Received up**, *Luke* xxiv. 48, 51, *Acts* i. 8, 9; comp. *Ps.* cx. 1, *Acts* ii. 34.

20. Perhaps founded on the shorter appendix with a reference to the signs, verses 17, 18. **Amen**, a Hebrew word signifying assent, 'so be it.' See *Deut.* xxvii. 15, *Ps.* cvi. 48; comp. *1 Kings* i. 36; thence it became a concluding word of solemn confirmation, *Ps.* xli. 13, lxxii. 19, lxxxix. 52, and passed from Jewish to Christian usage, *1 Cor.* xiv. 16, *Matt.* vi. 13.

CONCLUSION.

WE have seen that the Gospel according to Mark ends with a mystery—the empty grave. To some, that mystery will seem to urgently demand an explanation, and any explanation will be accepted as better than none. To others, the greater mystery which surrounds every grave will seem to swallow up the less, and their chief desire will be to continue to regard Jesus as a typical representative of mankind, and his fate as a conspicuous illustration of that of all his brothers and sisters of the human race. This is a thought worth pursuing a little further. We have already seen that the Jews expected that in ‘the Resurrection’ the dead would rise with bodily form (comp. p. 133, *First Three Gospels*, p. 114). The significance of this belief is plain. It was the means by which pious imagination sought to secure *the continuity of the individual*, to make sure that it should be, not a newly-created being, but the *same person* who lived again after death. Here is a point often debated among ancient philosophers, and it shows us a difficulty which was really felt and had to be met.

St. Paul thought the matter out, and speaks with much confidence what he believes to be the truth. Starting from the image of grain which springs up and rises above the ground in a form quite different from the seed beneath the clod, he remarks that in the same manner the dead, sown with their natural body in the grave, will be raised in quite a new condition, which he terms a spiritual body. The nature of this body is nowhere described. But it is evidently quite different from the ordinary human frame of flesh and blood which has not passed through death (*1 Cor.* xv. 50). While, therefore, St. Paul bears emphatic witness to a resurrection of Jesus, he cannot be quoted in support of a flesh and blood resurrection; he certainly believed that the appearances recorded in *1 Cor.* xv. 5-8 were those of the spiritual body. The early Church, however, failed to rise to the height of St. Paul's thought, it clung to the popular belief in a reanimated corpse, and accordingly the latest narratives concerning the risen body of Jesus, as in *John* xxi. 24-27, imply a conception far more material than the apostle's language anywhere indicates.

At the present day, there are still many Christians who expect a bodily resurrection for themselves, and they attach the same importance as the early disciples to the accounts of the raising of the body of Jesus. But there are now also many Christian disciples who do not expect their own bodies to be raised when they are admitted to a future life. They see that the same particles of matter have helped to form many different human bodies. During the life of the body the matter composing it is constantly being changed;

and, after death, its constituent elements are resolved back into their original forms, and are reabsorbed in, perhaps, hundreds of successive generations of human beings. But while the sciences of matter thus dispose of any possibility of a bodily resurrection, the science of mind helps us to feel that such a resurrection is useless and needless to secure the continuity of the individual. We have now a far more definite idea of a soul, which can continue to exist apart from the body which dies, and which is throughout earthly life the *real person*, dwelling in the body only as a man lives in a house. Ingenious theorists have suggested reasons for thinking that by our conduct here we are, as it were, weaving the bodies which we shall inhabit beyond the grave. This is no more than a mere theory. But the ease with which we can conceive it is proof how completely we have got over the old philosophical difficulty which once compelled men to believe in a bodily resurrection. The real touchstone of individual continuity is *memory*. There have been various fancies about preexistence, but we know that we—our real selves or souls—have not previously existed, in any true sense of the term, because no such life can be recalled in memory. And whatever be the clothing of the soul in a future life, it will still be the same soul, if, and only if, that soul remembers its own life in this world.

The application of this thought to the case of Jesus is clear. There is no more reason why we should demand a bodily resurrection for him than for ourselves. If he is still to be to us the typical illustration, his passage from this life, through death, and

into a future life, must be similar to what we expect for ourselves. A bodily resurrection for him would not guarantee, or in any way lead us to expect, a totally different fate affecting ourselves.

Such a thought solves none of the problems which belong to the history of the primitive church, but it leaves us content to bring our study in the earliest records of the life of Jesus to a close where the Gospel according to Mark comes to an end. The enemies of Jesus could kill his body, but after that there was no more that they could do. Killing the body was not killing the soul. Jesus, child of God, was safe beneath his Father's care.

APPENDIX A.

The Choice of Hercules.

Abridged from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, ii. 1, 21-33.

HERCULES is represented as a strong young man engaged in the service of a hard master, and of an age when young people determine their own course in life. He came out into a quiet valley, where two roads met him, to decide which of the two he should take. Along these two roads there came towards him two tall women ; one was fair and frank, with modest eyes, clothed in white raiment and neatly adorned ; the other had her face painted to seem both redder and whiter than the reality, and hot restless eyes, and a gay dress made to show her soft beauty, and she often looked at herself and gazed to see if any others were looking at her. As they approached, the first woman came on with even pace, but the second ran to secure the first word. She said, ' Hercules, I see thee ' to be in doubt which way to take. If thou wilt make ' me thy friend, I will lead thee along a pleasant, easy ' road, where thou shalt taste every delight, and live

‘free from every trouble. Thou shalt never hear of wars or business, but shalt spend thy whole time satisfied with what is gratifying to eat and to drink, to see and to hear, amid favourite companions, upon softest couches, all without toil. For fear not that thou wilt have to procure these things for thyself: whatsoever things others work for, these shalt thou use, for I give authority to my associates to benefit themselves from all sources.’

Hercules, having heard this, replied: ‘Woman, what is thy name?’ She answered, ‘Those who are my friends call me Happiness, but those who hate me have nick-named me Vice.’

At this point, the other woman having come up, said, ‘Hercules, I, too, come to thee, having known thy parents and thy boyhood; and, therefore, I hope that thou wilt come with me to seek things beautiful and honourable; only, I will not deceive thee with fair words, but will show thee what is the truth. The things which are good and beautiful are not given to men without toil and care. If thou wishest to be loved by friends, thou must show kindness to friends; if thou desirest to be honoured by any city, thou must benefit that city; if thou claimest the admiration of all Greece, thou must be of service to all Greece; if thou seekest the fruits of the earth, or the increase of cattle, thou must till the earth and tend the cattle; if thou wishest thy body to serve thy mind, thou must train thy body with much exercise and sweat.’

Then Vice broke in, ‘Dost thou perceive, Hercules, how long a road this woman will lead thee before thou reachest any enjoyment? My road thither is short and easy.’

Virtue replied, 'Wretched woman, what good thing
 'hast thou to offer? Or what dost thou know of good,
 'wishing for these things, while doing nothing to earn
 'them? Before thou art hungry thou wilt eat, before
 'thou art thirsty thou wilt drink. Thou must have
 'costly wines, and fetch snow in summer, to procure
 'thee a pleasant meal. To sleep, thou must be rocked
 'to rest on softest pillows; for it is not toil, but having
 'nothing to do, which makes thee desire to sleep. All
 'thy pleasures are forced and unnatural, wantoning by
 'night, and spending in bed the best hours of the day.
 'Though thou art one of the Immortals, thou hast been
 'rejected by the gods and art dishonoured by good
 'men; thou art deaf to the sweetest of all music, the
 'praise of a good conscience, blind to the fairest of
 'all sights, a good work of thine own doing. Who
 'would trust thy word; who would help thee in distress?
 'Thy companions, when young, are weak in body,
 'when old, senseless in soul; in youth, they make a
 'fair show; in old age they look squalid, disgraced by
 'their past and depressed by the present, having ex-
 'hausted all sweetness of life in youth, and left only its
 'troubles for old age.

'But I am the companion of the gods and of all
 'good men; nothing beautiful, divine or human, is
 'done without me; workers love me as a fellow-worker;
 'I guard the master's house, and give kindly help to
 'those who discharge domestic duties; a trusted partner
 'in peace and ally in war, I am always the best of
 'friends.

'For my friends have a real enjoyment of food and
 'drink, gratifying only the natural appetite; and they

‘sleep the sweet sleep of the tired, having first earned it
‘by the discharge of duty. The young rejoice in the
‘praise of their elders, the elders delight in the achieve-
‘ments of the young; the renown of former deeds is
‘sweet in remembrance, and happy is the record of
‘present fame; thus am I dear to the gods, beloved by
‘friends, honoured by fellow-countrymen. And when
‘my friends come to the fated end, they do not lie
‘down unhonoured in oblivion; but, as a flower, they
‘bloom again in song and everlasting remembrance.
‘Hercules, through thy parents, hast thou the oppor-
‘tunity given thee of winning by hard work immortal
‘bliss.’ So Hercules made his choice for the life which
brought him his twelve great labours, and gave him
the crown of life and fame.



APPROXIMATE DATES OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

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HISTORY OF ISRAEL		LITERATURE
	1400 B.C.	1400
	~ 1320 Exodus from Egypt.	
	1300	1300
	~ 1260 Settlement in Canaan	
Period of Judges	1200	1200
		Song of Deborah (Judg. 5.)
Period of Saul, David, and Solomon.	1100	1100
		Ten Commandments
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	1000	1000
		Division of the Kingdom
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	900	900
		House of Omri.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	843	800
		~ First Cycle (EX. NUM. SAM. IS.) Early narratives of Pentateuch and Joshua (Cyclops) ~ Early narratives of Judges and Samuel.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	800	800
		Early narratives of Pentateuch and Joshua (Eliott); Amos, Hosea
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	722	
	701	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.		
		Isaiah, Micah.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	700	700
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	621	Deuteronomy.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	600	600
		Jeremiah Judges, Ezekiel, Samuel, and Kings and Isaiah, Habakkuk.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	586	
	586	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	586	
	580	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.		
		Priority of Lev. Ruth, Malachi ~ Job, Joel.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	500	500
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	458	
	445	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	444	
		~ Jonah
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	400	400
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	300	300
		Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah Final edition of Pentateuch and Joshua, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus ~ Ecclesiastes.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	200	200
		Daniel, ~ Esther, Tobit, 1 Maccabees.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	166	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	61	100
	19	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	19	
	10	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	4	
		Psalm of Solomon, Assumption of Moses.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	291	
	36	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	66	
	70	
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.		
		54-60 Paul's Epistles 770 Mark Luke
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	100 A.D.	A. D. 100
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	132	100
		Matthew, John.
Period of Israel, Rehoboam, and Solomon.	200	200

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