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JUDGED BY HIS WORDS.

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JUDGED BY HIS WORDS.

*AN ATTEMPT TO WEIGH A CERTAIN KIND
OF EVIDENCE RESPECTING CHRIST.*

by
T. Green

‘By thy words thou shalt be justified.’—MATT. xii. 37.

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JUDGED BY HIS WORDS.



CHAPTER I.

THE OPENING STATEMENT.

THERE are not a few thinking persons amongst us whose minds are often occupied with a question which, if we only looked at the surface of things, we might have supposed the present existence of their own professed religion, and its uncontrollable growth during eighteen centuries, must have settled for them. We can readily fancy that a Roman or a Greek hearing of the encroachments of a new faith might have asked, ‘What was its founder?—who was this Christ?’ We can imagine that to any Christian teacher, zealously inviting him to join the new sect, he would have replied, ‘Wait till I know something definite about the claims and the character of the man by whose name you are called. Before taking the first step towards joining your communion, I must thoroughly satisfy my judgment on those points; but you must say by what means you can help me to do this; for, by your own acknowledgment, your Master has left the earth, so I cannot have him in my presence as a witness for examination. Have you any really trustworthy evidence to lay before me?’ A demand such as this would be obviously appropriate on the part of a candid heathen flourishing

about the end of the first century. But how comes it that we are hearing one just like it from men who call themselves Christians now?

It is not my present business to enquire whether it should be taken as a gloomy or a hopeful indication—whether it is bad for us or good—that Christ, if I may use the expression without irreverence, should be brought in these days before the bar of public opinion. A grief of mind this is to many a pious soul; but all the disquietudes of the timid will not alter the state of the case. We have a fact to deal with, and we must make the best we can of it. The enquiry cannot be stopped, but it may be of use to attempt the collection of materials by which it may be met. It would be interesting enough to trace its strangely-timed origin, and to find how it happens that men hold in light esteem now evidence that was found satisfactory enough by their fathers; but I shall not pursue that line of investigation. It may be well, however, for a moment to glance at two classes of men under the influence of very opposite ideas.

First, there are the tranquil ones, who consider that renewed examination is perfectly needless, because abundant grounds have always existed for belief. In this class are numbers of people for whom abstruse enquiries into matters of evidence are utterly impossible, and there are many others who would find such investigations extremely unpalatable, even if within the scope of their apprehension. Then there are men who are well-satisfied in believing from an instinctive reliance on authority. They submissively accept what is put before them by their good pastor, or master, or others whom they deem wiser and stronger than themselves. And there is a subdivision, still happier, in our midst, composed of those who have what they count the most irrefragable evidence of the power and truth of Christ; for they find that the Gospel fulfils its promises,

that it does what it professes to do. They feel, and their impressions are correct, that whilst unworthy themselves of the rich and happy lot they believe to be in store for them, whilst still subject to the failings of human nature, they are much better men than they would have been if they had not accepted the offers of grace. They are sure that nothing but Christ's Gospel can redress the ills of life. It has brought them peace of mind and a hope full of immortality, and they have a certainty that no incident can really hurt them whilst they maintain a faithful hold on its promises.

On the other hand there is the class of men to whom I alluded when I began. They may fairly say that very sincere persons may deceive themselves or be deceived; that Christianity, though the best form of religion and the most incentive to virtue that has yet appeared, has its difficulties, and that it involves some by no means painless sacrifices. Whilst admitting that the influence of a clergy such as that of the Church of England is generally beneficial, they are sensitively suspicious of priestcraft, a thing which they hold answerable for enormous mischief done in the world. Whilst they can reverence antiquity they spurn what is called tradition. They are able to admire the genius of great ecclesiastical writers, but find that the judgments of theologians are apt to be so contradictory that one of them very often neutralises another. In short, they declare that no man should be required to believe anything of which satisfactory proof cannot be brought. But what was thought good proof some time ago will not suffice the generation that has now arisen. Christianity is subjected like everything else to the new rays which modern scientific research has liberated. It must bear examination in the light which has sprung up in our own times, or it will be cast aside as counterfeit.

And I am by no means sure the manifestation of this

spirit of enquiry should be looked at as a painful sign by those who already believe. They ought to consider it a much better thing than the indifference that prevailed before it sprung up. It became within the last very few years (one might almost say but few months ago) the means of fixing public attention on the life of Christ in so forcible a way that a man could scarcely hold his own in respectable society without having made himself passably familiar with the contents of one or two works of absorbing interest that had appeared on the subject. Where, not long before, the New Testament could hardly have been named, earnest religious discussion showed what a turn had been given to men's studies. And those who find Christianity divine and good, ought to rejoice when they see a general and honest desire prevailing to examine its foundations.

But they must be prepared to give a very good reason indeed for the hope that is in them. Conventionalisms passing current among friends will not serve under existing requirements. Upholders of Christianity must be ready with something that will stand rigorous investigation as it is conducted at the present day. .

I suppose I may take this for granted; and accordingly shall henceforth write under the assumption that there is now a demand, from a large and increasing class, for some evidence that may prove generally satisfactory with respect to the *Character and Nature of Christ*.

And so I come back to the question, Is it possible to supply this?

There are many good men who would say, 'Nothing more easy. Take for your purpose the positive declarations of God's Word.' They mean, of course, the testimony of Scripture, the whole of which they are perfectly satisfied is God's Word. But, rightly or wrongly, many of our enquirers would tell us, 'We can know nothing whatever of the inspiration of Evangelists and writers of Epistles

in the New Testament, beyond what the person with respect to whom we are to give our judgment is stated to have said. You are begging the question; for it is reasoning in a circle to say that Christ must be the Son of God because Scripture declares that he is so; and then to assure us that Scripture must be true, because the Son of God said of those who wrote it that they should be led into all truth.'

This objection equally applies to the evidence which other good men might say should be taken from the works of Christ, as enough, by themselves, to prove their performer possessed of boundless benevolence and divine power. But the miracles, of which we have no account except in Scripture, are themselves rather stumbling blocks in the way of some men's belief than otherwise. There are not wanting persons who (unreasonably, I think) hold that a miracle is an impossibility. Others, who go not quite so far as they, assert not only that Christianity cannot be proved by miracles, but that miracles can only be accepted on the authority of a proved Christianity.

What is to be done then? Can we offer no evidence that can obtain even a hearing? I do not despair.

When the study of natural philosophy began to be put on a right footing, or rather when science began to be pursued in a right direction within this land about three centuries ago, some great men made their names illustrious, not by blind adherence to old paradoxes and systems which they found sanctioned by the authority of many ages, but by an independent and thorough examination freshly undertaken of every object that came within their reach. And the discovery and demonstration of the most wonderful truths rewarded their experiments. However humble and unpromising their materials, they worked faithfully on till some of the grandest phenomena of nature were interpreted, and results were attained of the utmost

benefit to mankind. Now, if we are disposed to work by the same rule of experiment and comparison we may deem our materials limited, but I cannot think them wholly wanting.

It is a simple truth that in the books of the New Testament alone we find our accounts of Christ, of his life and his words. No sensible person would acknowledge any other source for an instant. And the New Testament is a very remarkable book well worth examination. For present purposes, however, we may leave out the Epistles and Apocalypse, as the Gospels alone profess to contain a record of what Christ actually did and said.

But there are very few of his reported acts which do not partake of the miraculous ; and so, if the objection I alluded to before is to hold good, I must not rely on them for our purpose. But after all there remain Christ's *Words*. And they are what I propose to bring forward in evidence of his nature and character. This evidence I intend to examine in detail. And in its review I may briefly consider it in connection with a fact that requires no evidence—the existence of the Christian religion at the present time as a structure that must have been reared on some basis.

But if I have not yet sufficiently done so, it may be proper to make it clearly understood here that I am neither ignoring the large body of true believers in Christianity who are satisfied with such proofs as they have before them, nor the large class of those who are equally satisfied without requiring any proofs at all. I am far from presuming to imagine that anything in my power to offer can make their position more gratifying than it already is. I must also add that I do not undertake what I am about because in my opinion the attention of able men has not from time to time been duly devoted to the import of Christ's words. I write to see if the exigencies of one particular class of persons can be met ; and also because I

do not know if the distinct line of investigation I shall attempt to pursue has yet been thoroughly explored with steady perseverance, from beginning to end, without turning to the right hand or to the left.

It should further be understood that, whatever my private opinions may be on the subject of what is called *inspiration*, I shall not for the purposes of this enquiry ask any one to take the four Gospels as proved to be ‘the word of God.’ These books will be looked on, as far as any argument is concerned, merely as certain documents which came to light at some period or other, it matters not precisely when, containing internal evidence of having been written before a certain date in the Christian era. Whatever I may think about the matter, I shall not find it needful to stipulate that every statement found in the Gospels must be accepted as strictly accurate. We do not reject a witness in a court of justice because we are not sure he never made a mistake in his life, or was betrayed into an exaggeration. We hear what he has to say, and if necessary listen to arguments afterwards about the value of his testimony. Let us pursue the same course now, impartially examining the evidence which the words of Christ recorded in the Gospels may be found to give of his nature and character, and then judging how far this testimony should be accepted as trustworthy.

But I must now anticipate a question likely enough to be asked. Why judge Christ by his words? Why should not the old proverb, ‘Deeds and not words,’ hold good in this case as well as in every other?

The proverb is a true one, and I am certain the examination of Christ’s recorded actions would richly repay any amount of time or trouble that could be expended on it. And I should like to see such a work taken up on the plan I shall adopt with respect to his words. But I have partly given my reasons for not entering on such an examination

here, in remarks already made on the modern prejudice against everything that comes into relation with the miraculous. Yet I have somewhat more to say in favour of my present course.

I apprehend that the proverb just quoted means we should judge of a man more by his actions than by his professions; and in this sense I entirely agree with it, and it is especially applicable when a man's professions are belied by his acts. It cannot be proved that Christ's were, and the objection so far falls to the ground. The proverb is directed against boasters. But were the words of Christ boastful utterances? We shall indeed often find them conveying the assertion of lofty claims, but such claims are the very things it will be great part of our business to look into. And by far the larger number of his words will be found to have been uttered with the object of imparting instruction, and prescribing the conditions of the kingdom he came to establish.

What has induced me perhaps as much as anything else to make my present attempt, is the fact, with which I have been greatly impressed of late, that Christ himself is reported to have laid down the principle that a man should be judged by his words—'By thy words,' he said, 'thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' Again, 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man evil things.' And I believe these rules practically hold good. It may certainly be said, how then can you judge a very silent man? I answer, it is difficult to do so. The character of a man who speaks very little is often mistaken. Yet every one not physically dumb speaks in his family, or to his servants, or amongst his familiar friends; and his words will be many enough to reveal to them a kind heart or a morose disposition; they may indicate

irresolution or fortitude, an empty or a well-stored mind. But words in these days are not solely those of the tongue. The silent man may have the pen of a ready writer; and words written in a letter or printed in a book or newspaper may, as being more permanent and addressed to a wider circle, be more potent for good or for harm in the world, more retributive or justifying when he from whom they proceed comes up for judgment, than any spoken by the mouth. But Christ was not a silent man, and we never read of his having written in his life, except in one passage, itself apocryphal, where we are told about his stooping down and writing on the ground.

I am disposed to maintain that by means of fair average samples of the words proceeding from a man in all the varied circumstances of his life—in the family, in the world, in his business, in his pleasures, in exultation and in depression, among his foes and in the society of his friends, during sudden excitement or after mature deliberation, in early manhood and at the close of his career—we might, if we could get at them, form a true judgment of his character. What would it avail us to hear of the patience of Job without knowing by his words to his wife and his friends the way in which that patience triumphed, and what painful mental strains had tried it? Does not the glorious old poem that goes by his name show us a head and heart exercised in just the same way that many thoughtful and feeling ones are at the present day? And upon what are founded the numerous disquisitions that have appeared on the character of Hamlet? Are they upon his acts, made known by a few stage directions, as, *he makes a pass through the arras* (killing Polonius), or, *he wounds Laertes*? Or are they not almost entirely on the words put in his mouth? Of course, as Hamlet is a mere creature of imagination, I only bring forward this case to illustrate my meaning, that a man can be judged by his

words And we shall have hereafter to enquire whether the sayings in the Gospel could possibly have been put in Christ's mouth by the Evangelists if he had not really uttered them.

I should add that Christ not only attached great importance to the words of men in general, but that he declared more than once or twice the extreme importance of his own words in particular, both as affecting the responsibilities of those who heard, and as showing his own true character and nature to men. He once referred the mental inability of the Jews to comprehend his doctrine and objects, to their inattention to his word. He as much as said to Philip at another time, 'If you are not equal to the reception of the truth that my words are in effect the words of the Father, you must be content with the lower manifestation of God in my works,' thereby placing the words in the first, and the works in the second place of proof. This will seem indisputable to any one who will go on to notice how Christ finally disposes of the matter by intimating that, whilst he alone could speak such words as those that proceeded from his mouth, any of his faithful followers should be able to perform works quite as great as his own, yea, even greater (John xiv. 12).

He said elsewhere that the word he had spoken should judge a man at the Last Day. He ascribed a cleansing efficacy to his word (John xv. 3). He said in stronger language still that his words were life (vi. 63). And again, that if a man should be ashamed of Christ's words, of him should the Son of man be hereafter ashamed (Mark viii. 38, Luke ix. 26); that heaven and earth should pass away, but that his words should not pass away (Matt. xxiv. 35).

And it is remarkable how comparatively abundant are the materials we possess of judging of Christ by his recorded words. Thus, although in the first Gospel there

are no words of his in the two earliest chapters, and very few indeed in the third, twenty-seventh (a very long one of sixty-six verses), and the last, yet so thickly do they appear in the other chapters, that considerably more than one-half of the whole book is composed of words stated to have been actually uttered by the mouth of Christ. Or, to put the case in another way, of the 1,071 verses in St. Matthew, above 640 either contain some words of Christ, or are entirely composed of his sayings. There is not a single chapter in Mark or John without some of his words. It is unnecessary to state how often they appear in Luke, who gives several parables and discourses unrecorded by any of his brother Evangelists. And there are whole chapters in the first and fourth Gospels containing nothing whatever but words ascribed to Christ.

I trust I have said enough to show the importance of an examination of the evidence that may be found in Christ's words. In conducting it, one is forced at the outset to arrange some plan by which matters of detail may be mastered. For there are four distinct accounts. Many sayings found in one are recorded also in others. And again, each of the Gospels presents sayings to be found only in itself. Some kind of order is therefore requisite by means of which repetition may be avoided and no utterance left unnoticed. In this emergency I have resorted to the first 'harmony' that happened to come to hand. It serves my present purpose well enough, though I must take the opportunity of professing my belief that the construction of a perfect harmony of the Gospels is an impossibility. If four persons of independent views give their impressions, derived from the best authority, of a number of events and sayings connected with the history of a man, nothing but complicity, or a needless or rather misleading miracle which would suggest complicity, could insure the absence of discre-

pancies. And the case is made stronger by the fact that only one of the writers professes to have been a personal witness, and that his account was a supplementary rather than a general one, and given many years after the subject of it had left the earth. And my purpose requires no accuracy of chronological arrangement. Of the various compendiums drawn up with fair impartiality, one would suit me for the sake of convenience just as well as another.

At the head of each section in the next chapter I had intended placing the exact words of Christ under examination, as recorded by the Evangelists. And to make my book perfect, this of course would be requisite. But it is obvious that such a plan would make it very bulky, whilst nothing which it is within my power to do would make it perfect. The words I omit therefrom are of infinitely greater value than those which appear therein. But New Testaments are always at hand, or may be had for a few pence each. I trust therefore that the indication of the respective passages in the course of which they occur, by mention of chapter and verse, will be found sufficient for every purpose of this enquiry.

I will finish this chapter with one or two observations about the plan upon which the next will be constructed.

In proportion to our comprehension of Christ's words will be the value of the evidence to be derived from them respecting his nature and character. It will be my object, therefore, under each of the sections of the following chapter to make a few remarks for the sake of putting in a clear light before an ordinary English reader whatever our version of the New Testament, or our non-appreciation of modes of thought or habit prevailing in the ancient East may have left obscure to him. I shall probably seem to have erred in two very different directions. In the first place there may be diffuseness occasionally beyond

what a mere explanation might seem to require. Such apparent errors of judgment will I trust only be noticed when I meet with an unavoidable necessity of using argument or illustration for the establishment of a true meaning. I may add too that much steady labour is requisite sometimes in presenting in a connected form the different parts of some of Christ's discourses as reported by the Evangelists in general and John in particular. On the other hand, it will often be thought that my remarks are very bare, and that many a fine opportunity of conveying instruction, of drawing a moral, or enforcing a doctrine is missed. But it is best to attend to one thing at a time, and what I have now before me has nothing to do with all these good things. The occasion is often tempting enough; and something of the sort, from no design on my part, may here and there get in; for I defy a man to write honestly about the words of Christ without saying a few useful things. But I shall try to prevent the appearance of aught that may pass our special limits.

With these remarks I conclude my opening statement, and proceed to offer 'the Evidence,' which, in my third and last chapter, I shall attempt to classify and summarise.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVIDENCE.

SECTION I.—*Christ at Twelve Years of Age with the Doctors in the Temple.*

(Luke ii. 41-50.)

WE are told here how Christ, having reached the age when Israelitish youths were thought to become personally subject to the observances of the law, had been for the first time taken by his parents up to the Feast of the Passover; and how, after the days of unleavened bread, Mary had begun the return journey with her friends, and a whole day had been spent on the way between Jerusalem and Galilee before she noticed that her son was not in the company. An anxious search was then made; but it was fruitless for the space of three days, after which he was found among the doctors in the temple, eagerly listening to their instructions and asking them questions. Filled with wonder at the scene and the marks of character which it revealed in her beloved child, but somewhat hurt by his conduct, Mary, in gently complaining tones, said, ‘Son, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.’ ‘But how could you? Ought you not to have thought of this place at once?’ answered Christ.* ‘Have you forgotten whose

* I may state now, in order to avoid many needless repetitions hereafter, that whenever the sentence following the term ‘*Christ said*’ is not

son I really am? Where should I be found but here—at my Father’s—learning my work, and fitting myself for His business? These people know not from whence I come. But you, my mother, should keep in mind the relationship I bear to Him whose house this temple is.’

Here are the first recorded words of Christ; and most appropriately do they stand at the head of his sayings. For they contain his claim to be in a peculiar manner the Son of God, and prove his determination, even from the earliest dawn of manhood to fulfil courageously and independently the work that should be given him to do. Yet Christ appears here in perfectly human nature also. Feeling unqualified without an increase of knowledge for entering upon his labours, he seized the first opportunity that presented itself for profiting by the instructions of men more learned than as yet he was. We cannot wonder that those around him understood not his words. Even Mary, after having found a mother’s cares rewarded by a course of twelve years’ sweet docility on the part of her son, was at length in some danger of allowing ordinary routine to efface the remembrance of the salutation made to her as the most highly favoured among women. So even she was not prepared to comprehend Christ’s saying perfectly. But she kept it in her heart. Altogether noteworthy was that saying, proceeding from the lips of a youth brought up in retirement and in habits of obedience, and well versed in the Scriptures, which said, ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is ONE LORD.’

given in the precise language of Scripture, it must be understood that, *to the best of my own judgment*, Christ’s meaning may be fairly conveyed in the words I then proceed to use.

SECTION II.—*The Baptism of Christ.*

(Matt. iii. 13-17.)

‘Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,’ answered Christ when John, who preached the baptism of repentance to men in general, but pointed out Christ as the light of the world, the Lamb without blemish, would have forbidden him to be baptised. The reply to the austere man, commanding even in its humility, amounted to this:—‘In my relationship to God and participation in His purity, the rite you dispense is certainly not needful for me. It is true that I require no baptism of repentance. For its ministers are not only as to office, but in nature, infinitely below myself. And it is true that I am now about to introduce a dispensation which must supersede yours and last as long as the world remains. Your functions will soon be at an end, for you can only prepare my way. Yet your office is of God, and as such, it is the duty of every righteous man to magnify it. Your objection springs from a correct appreciation of my dignity, but those around you comprehend it not. As a man, and one who must honour God’s ordinances, I must acknowledge your baptism by being myself baptised. Suffer it then to be so now.’

Here we see an instance of the exercise of the highest wisdom and prudence. We should observe also that Christ does not in the least degree repudiate John’s recognition of his exalted nature.

SECTION III.—*The Temptation in the Wilderness.*

(Matt. iv. 1-11 ; Luke iv. 1-13.)

Christ when undergoing the terrible temptation that came upon him immediately after his baptism, resorted to

Scripture for words wherewith to repel each of the three attacks. Who can tell if his mental as well as bodily powers were not well-nigh overwhelmed by what he had suffered? But his memory, thoroughly furnished from the sacred writings, supplied answers to the tempter more effective than elaborate arguments could have been. The Son of man was exhausted after his long fast, and tormented with the cravings of hunger. He had just been declared to be the Son of God; and his subsequent readiness to turn water into wine, and to multiply the scanty provision for a few into abundant food for thousands, shows that he had full confidence in the power conferred upon him by the Spirit. He was tempted now to turn the stones around him into bread for his own refreshment; for what could be done by him for mankind or for the glory of his Father if he must there perish with hunger? But the Scripture which had taught him not to make haste, to trust in God, and that the Lord would provide, had said ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ He determined then not to make haste, he was resolved to trust in God, certain that the Lord would provide, and that he should be duly supplied with all things necessary for the performance of his work. This temptation overcome, it was suggested to Christ, now confident in divine care, that he should perform something that would both put God’s protection of him to an immediate test, and exhibit an undeniable and most conspicuous evidence to the people of the favour in which he was held by the Almighty. What a sign from heaven it would be, what a help for his cause, if he were to cast himself down, before the gaze of the multitude, from a pinnacle of the temple, and alight amongst them unhurt! For was it not written, ‘He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou

dash thy foot against a stone' ? ' Yes,' said Christ, ' and in all the way marked out for me by my Father, I shall be supported ; but it is written, " Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." I will not forestall the purposes of God. I will not be induced to require now those demonstrations of power which shall come in due time.' The suggestion was then made to Christ that he was right in not requiring such manifestations ; there was a way open to him which would render them altogether unnecessary. Let him think of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them all ! A prize greater than mortal man had yet possessed ! But they were all to be Christ's. He should inherit them in full. How were such kingdoms obtained and established ? Doubtless by worldly wisdom and force. They were all of them at present under the dominion of evil. Then let the future conqueror abjure a course of painful self-denial and act like all other great men. Let him take the ready help of the prince of this world and enter upon a course of conquest and glory. He should be immediately hailed as a Deliverer, all should be his, and then he could rule in majesty and justice for ever. But Christ said with indignation, ' Get thee hence, Satan ! No allegiance whatever will I own to the prince of the world ; for it is written, " Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." '

This passage affords throughout an exhibition of patience, fortitude, trust in God, and most remarkable wisdom and forethought in him who thus suffered being tempted. Pressing as was his necessity, he was able to look beyond the time present, and to see that his work would be furthered by the exercise of his miraculous powers for the benefit of others and for the glory of God, and not for his own temporary and personal comfort. On the other hand, he would not imperil needlessly the

body God had prepared for him. He would work no miracle for the sake of display. By an exhibition very different from that suggested by the tempter he would draw all men to himself. And again, when not only the provincial splendour of Herod's Court, but the magnificence of imperial Rome were set dazzlingly before the eyes of the Son of man suffering from humiliation and temporary destitution, he could see that if he chose to make his kingdom one of this world, his servants might successfully fight indeed, and he might appear for some time as the deliverer of Israel and the ruler of the nations, but the end for which he came would not be accomplished—the powers of this evil world, and not the Son of God, would have triumphed. He saw that such was not the way by which all things should be put under his feet.

SECTION IV.—*Introduction of some of the Apostles to Christ, and his Interview with Nathanael.*

(John i. 35-51.)

In this passage we have Christ's invitation to two of John's disciples; we have his reception of Andrew's brother, Simon, and the change of that disciple's name to Cephas, a stone; we have Christ's recognition of Nathanael as an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile; and, in answer to Nathanael's wondering exclamation, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! thou art the King of Israel!' we have the words, 'Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Your father Jacob dreamed that he saw a ladder between earth and heaven; you shall have the privilege of actually seeing him who is the way of communication between

the two. You shall see how by him the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers.'

Here we note Christ's willingness to receive disciples, and his kindness to them. We note also his marvellous discernment and appreciation of character, both with respect to Peter and Nathanael. In his interview with the latter, we see how he claimed a supernatural knowledge of events both past and future; and it must be noted that Christ accepted without rebuke Nathanael's salutation of him as 'the Son of God, the King of Israel!'

SECTION V.—*The Marriage at Cana.*

(John ii. 1-11.)

Christ had returned to the home of his parents, and had been subject unto them, after having been found in the temple with the doctors. But eighteen years had been spent since that; and his recognition by John, and then the voice from heaven at his baptism, had marked the period when he passed out of private life and began the great work for which he was qualified by nature, by the Spirit of God, and by his own mature experience, meditations, and studies. Henceforth, he who had been an obedient child, and ever continued to be a most loving son, moved entirely out of the bounds of human authority. No family ties should now be suffered to interpose between him and his work. 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' was the answer to his mother when she thought to indicate the proper time for an action of kindness on his part. 'Mine hour is not yet come,' he continued. 'None but myself can know the moment when it will be most right that my power and goodness should be manifested.' But when that moment arrived, he did not cast

discredit on his mother by neutralising the arrangements she had thoughtfully put in train. He gave directions to the servants who had been prepared to respect his orders; and when they had attended to his instructions, and the miracle had been performed, he authoritatively and confidently said, 'Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast.'

We see here Christ's determined renunciation of everything that would interfere with his great work. Blessed among women and highly favoured was his mother, and great was his love for her. But mother, brother, and sisters, home and comforts, were nothing to him now, when his work was in question. We also see his kind considerateness in providing for the innocent indulgence and enjoyment of his mother's friends, and in preventing the mortification that would come upon those who gave the feast from the want of wine. We see also the confidence he had in his own miraculous, or rather creative, powers.

SECTION VI.—*The First Cleansing of the Temple.*

(John ii. 13-22.)

'Take these things hence,' said Christ to them that sold doves in the temple; 'make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.' And a power accompanied his words, which accomplished all he wished. For the Jews were astounded at what he had done, and asked what sign he would show them in testimony of his authority there. But Christ said, 'What have I done more than you or any good man zealous for God's honour should have attempted? If any justification is wanted, you have it in my success. Would any selfish hypocrite among you be obeyed if he pretended to give similar orders? But I

will propound something for you to cast in your minds; and in due time you shall have the opportunity of seeing how it shall be a sign of my unquestionable authority here, and my right to call this house my Father's. Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

We have here an astonishing instance of Christ's zeal for the honour of God, and of his extraordinary courage and determination. We suppose that up to that time he had performed no miracle in Jerusalem, and had acquired no reputation as a teacher. Yet he, a young man of thirty, new from the provinces, suddenly comes to the temple as the principal person there, calling it his Father's house, and most unceremoniously orders out of it every one and every thing he did not like to see there. He would not tolerate arrangements confessedly convenient for worshippers and sacrificers if in the least degree trenching upon the sacredness of the place. And in the midst of the rude excitement that must have followed his startling acts, with what readiness does Christ reply to the demand of the Jews for a sign! His answer, full to a depth they could not fathom, must have astonished them nearly as much as his actions. 'This body of mine, which in a sense that can be used of no other man's body on earth is the temple of God, a temple pure and holy, unprofaned like that which you frequent, you may, by my permission, destroy. Nevertheless, I, by virtue of my own inherent power, of which you have now seen something, will raise it up in three days.'

SECTION VII.—*The Interview with Nicodemus.*

(John iii. 1-21.)

Christ's opening words after the deferential salutation of Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews,

intimated to this important personage that there were conditions the neglect of which would exclude even him from the kingdom of heaven. It was a kingdom different from anything that had hitherto appeared; and he who would enter it, whether wise or unlearned, distinguished or unknown, must be ready to throw aside all preconceived ideas, and to become as a little child. He must be born again. Nicodemus thought it preposterous to expect such a thing as that of him. It was perfectly unnatural. But Christ said that unless he would accept the conditions, he must remain without. He must be born of water and of the Spirit, or there could be no entrance, even for him.* Nicodemus had come in private. It was well that he had come at all; but this was not enough. There must be the outward and visible sign of profession. There must also be the teachable and submissive reception of the enlightening and transforming Spirit. Nicodemus should not wonder that he could not quite understand all this, and could not see how it was that the Spirit of God should give a new life to a carnal man, for he could not explain how it was that the wind † came from one quarter or another; and yet its action was perfectly audible, and the effects of it undeniably manifest. When Nicodemus, still loth to accept all this, had said, ‘How can these things be?’ Christ replied, ‘How can you, who are by

* To the Jews in Christ’s time, the terms ‘new birth’ and ‘baptism’ could not have been strange ones. But they were applied mainly to the change in the state of a proselyte from a false religion to the true one. What astounded Nicodemus was the idea that he, who had always professed the true religion, who had long been a teacher of it, who was a man of high station, a member of the Sanhedrim, should be obliged publicly to confess that a change was necessary for himself. The theory at first sight seemed, as I have stated, preposterous to this venerable enquirer. It was no more to be imagined than that a man should enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born. I do not stop to discuss the question, whether Christ referred to the ‘water’ of the baptism of John, or of baptism in Christ’s name.

† *πνεῦμα*, the same word for ‘wind’ and ‘spirit.’

position one of Israel's teachers, pretend to know nothing of these things? Have you not read in Moses and David and the prophets of the influences of the Spirit? Do you know nothing about the requirements or customs of the Jewish Church respecting baptisms? nothing of the baptism of John? I am not talking as one of yourselves, who refer everything to tradition or the sayings of rabbis who have been before our time. I speak of what I personally know, and testify what I have seen, whether you receive my witness or not. I have hitherto spoken only of things needful for human beings on earth on becoming members of God's kingdom. Will you comprehend me any better if I speak of heavenly things? Of the love of God to all mankind, and the way in which that love is manifested, even in the gift of His only-begotten Son? Yet I will tell you that, as Moses offered up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'

Here we see first what may be called Christ's thorough independence. How flattered most young men would have been with a private visit from a person of Nicodemus's station and respectability! What an opportunity for advancement, and for securing the ear of the influential by a little good management! But the aid of the prince of this world had been renounced in the wilderness; and Christ was for ever independent of men, and would be as plain with the master in Israel as with the poorest disciple. On the other hand, we see Christ's wisdom in adapting his language to the actual condition, the capacities, and varied requirements of the characters that came before him. To many people we shall find him

giving practical directions ; but with this master of Israel he discourses on the eternal counsels of God, the principles of heavenly things, first causes, and the effective means of the salvation of the world. We must note also the dignity which he assumes for himself. He is the Son of man ; but his place by inheritance, his native place, is in heaven ; for he is also the only-begotten Son of God.

SECTION VIII.—*The Interview with the Woman of Samaria.*

(John iv. 1-42.)

Christ, weary and thirsty, scrupled not to say to a Samaritan woman, ‘ Give me to drink.’ He then refrained from noticing the littleness of her jealous reply and her hesitation to relieve a parched and wearied traveller merely because he was a Jew. He answered her not according to her folly, but showed her how she might have living water—how, indeed, she might have that which should be a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Christ then proved to her that he perfectly knew her history and condition and failings : and in answer to her further questionings, taught her that God is a spirit—that though, in consideration of the state of ignorance in which the tribes of Israel had been, He had ordained for Himself a house in Zion, the place which He had chosen, yet the Almighty did not dwell in temples made with hands. There was the temple of Jerusalem, in which God had in a special sense placed His name, for salvation was of the Jews ; and there was the Mount Gerizim of Samaria, where sincere but ill-instructed men worshipped the God of Israel. But he had now come to teach men that it should henceforth be no more necessary to go to Mount Zion than to Gerizim to worship. The men with whose worship the Father was truly pleased might fall down before Him in any part

of the earth. The true worshippers were not those whose service depended on places and on rites, but those who worshipped in spirit and in truth. Then, in answer to another observation of the woman, Christ plainly announced himself to her as the Messiah. On her leaving him, the disciples came with the food so much needed by his exhausted body. But he had been doing the will of his Father, and that was his meat. For he regarded not things present as men of the world did. To them, for instance, harvest might seem still at a distance. But to him the fields were ripe already to harvest; and his disciples, as Gospel reapers, should enter upon the labours of others. Holy men of old, psalmists, prophets, the Baptist, had laboured in preparing the soil and sowing the seed; and they, the apostles, should gather in the first fruits. But the end of all true-hearted labour was eternal life, and first and last should at length rejoice together.

Here we see Christ suffering, as any other human being might, from fatigue and thirst. But we see how perfectly free from impatience he was with the unreasonable woman who did not at once afford him the refreshment of a little cold water. Then we see how he who thoroughly knew the Scriptures offered to give living water that should cure thirst for ever. With whom he thus would identify himself would appear from reference to such texts as Is. xii. 3, and xlv. 3. We then see how Christ claimed a knowledge of the secret life of the woman; and how at length he declared himself to her as the Messiah. We lastly see that devotion to his work neutralised in him all feelings of bodily exhaustion.

SECTION IX.—*Commencement of Christ's Preaching.*

(Mark i. 14–15.)

It was in Galilee that Christ's ministry began. And we have the substance of his early preaching here. 'The time is fulfilled! All the preparations made by God through the times of the patriarchs, of Moses and the prophets, of the high priests up till now, and lastly of John the Baptist, are completed for the introduction of the kingdom of God on earth. It is at hand. Qualify yourselves to enter it. But those only who turn from their transgressions shall be members of it. As John said to you, I say therefore, "Repent." But I say more. For I require you to accept the Gospel—to believe the announcement that I make of God's goodwill to you.'

Christ appears here to look on the dispensation which he was to introduce, as the grand object of the counsels of God in the government of the world, and in the establishment and continuance of the Jewish system till the time of his appearance.

SECTION X.—*Cure of the Nobleman's Son.*

(John iv. 46–54.)

The Samaritans, despised and ignorant as they were, seem in some instances to have been more open to the reception of truth than the Jews. Those of Sychar had believed because of Christ's word. He complains here that the Jews will not believe unless they see signs and wonders. But the father of the sick youth was impatient whilst Christ was saying these things of his countrymen: he feared lest his son should die in the meantime, and urged an instant visit. Christ kindly assuaged the poor

father's anxiety by telling him that his son was restored to health from that moment.

We see here that Christ would not allow a good lesson to be lost on account of the temporary inconvenience or trouble which its teaching might cost some of those before him. On the other hand, we at length see his abundant goodness in exceeding the expectations of his petitioner.

SECTION XI.—*The Preaching at Nazareth.**

(Luke iv. 16-30.)

Having read aloud the prophecy in Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, Christ went on to say that it was that day fulfilled in their ears. It must be remembered that he was in the synagogue of the place where he had been brought up. Having proclaimed the Gospel in several other synagogues of Galilee, he determined that Nazareth should have an opportunity of hearing what his pretensions were from his own lips. But the announcement that he was come to fulfil prophecy was too much for his townsmen. They were astonished at such words from the young man whom they understood to be Joseph's son, one who had lived among them from infancy, and had exercised his calling like any other industrious person in their midst. Christ saw, too, that they were ready to say, If you make such claims as these, at least they ought to have been preceded by some of your mighty works. Your doings at Capernaum and other places have been much talked about. Do something for the people near your old home. Exhibit some of your miracles of healing on your former neighbours. But Christ would not flatter them by showing them any undue favour or regard. He had been applied

* I insert this here merely to keep to the arrangement in the harmony before me. But it should be probably put later in the history.

to in a sincere, earnest, and faithful spirit for the exercise of his healing powers in other places, and he would allow no captiousness to dictate to him. They might remember that a great prophet who was in time of famine obliged to leave his own country brought the gifts of plenty, not to any poor family in Israel, but to a widow of Sarepta. So, too, Elisha was commissioned to heal no leper in Israel, but Naaman the Syrian.

We see here how Christ claimed to be the subject of prophecy and the promised deliverer. We see his independence, impartiality, and courage. If his former neighbours and associates would not act in so good a spirit as others, they should not be so favourably treated. They should have no advantages merely because they had known him after the flesh. Human feelings should not influence him or his work for the world. Local interests and desire for the good opinion of fellow-townsmen should never prevent his uttering the truth.

SECTION XII.—*The final Calling of Simon and Andrew and the Calling of James and John.*

(Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11.)

When Christ directed Simon to launch out and let down his nets for a draught, we read here how, although the whole previous night's toil had been rewarded with no success, his word was obeyed, and how so many fishes were now enclosed in the net that it broke; and how on Peter's astonishment and self-abasement, Christ said to him and Andrew, 'Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men. Follow me.' We know also how effectual his call proved in the case of two other fishers, the noted sons of Zebedee, who left their father and property, and, together with Peter and Andrew, followed Christ.

We see here the power which Christ had over men, and his confidence in his own ability to make of them what he would.

SECTION XIII.—*Rebuke and Command to a Demon.*

(Mark. i. 21-28; Luke iv. 31-37.)

Preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, and interrupted by the cries of a man who had an unclean spirit, Christ rebuked him, and said, 'Be silent!' and then ordered the demon out of the man.

We see here, not only the consciousness of power, but the great wisdom manifested by Christ, who would not suffer himself to be proclaimed as the Holy One of God by the voice of the wretched being that desired to be let alone in pollution.

SECTION XIV.—*Christ's determination to Preach throughout the Country.*

(Mark i. 36-39; Luke iv. 43.)

After a most laborious day, Christ had retired from applauding crowds for a few hours' solitude and prayer. Those amongst whom he had been came up with a seductive request, to retire and remain amongst them. But Christ said it was not for him to settle down at ease in any one fixed place. Capernaum had had its opportunity; other towns must now have theirs. The kingdom had to be proclaimed by him throughout the land, and he would spare himself no labour in doing so.

We see here how indefatigable was Christ's activity, and how resolute his determination to labour in his Father's business. He was not the person to consult

his comfort and indulge self-complacency by remaining amongst admirers. He would not forget that, though he might be very useful to them, the particular care of a few must not interfere with a great plan for the welfare of all.

SECTION XV.—*The Sermon on the Mount.*

(Matt. v. vi. vii.)

In endeavouring to obtain whatever light a consideration of this marvellous discourse may throw on the character of Christ, it should always be remembered that the great preacher was describing things and men as he found them in his time; not perhaps as they always existed, and certainly not altogether as they exist now. Before going further then, let us think who they were that he had for his audience. First, there were his own disciples, whose names and, in several cases, professions and characters we have some acquaintance with. And then there were multitudes of people who had come for the very purpose of listening to his instructions. He began his address by congratulating all such on the privileges open to them. Those whom he saw before him were not rabbis puffed up with learning, or rather with the stuff then passing for it, neither were they persons full of joviality and mirth. They were not the arrogant, nor those who counted themselves righteous and despised others; neither in the main were they the cruel, the profligate, the licentious, and contentious. ‘Happy then,’ he said, ‘are ye,* poor though you

* I cannot but think that some of the beatitudes are often misunderstood. In the first place, I do not believe that the men around Christ were blessed *because* they were ‘poor in spirit,’ any more than they were (as in the parallel passage in Luke vi. 20) *because* they were ‘poor.’ It is no happiness simply to be poor, any more than to be afflicted, or persecuted; but the poor in spirit, the poor in circumstances, the persecuted, who believe in Christ, are happy *because* they attend to his words. Nor do I think that the expression translated ‘poor in spirit’ will bear the construction very often fixed upon it in the pulpit.

may be in spiritual gifts ; for with all your want of knowledge, and notwithstanding all your ignorance of religious lore, you who feel your spiritual poverty may come to me and find the way to the kingdom of heaven. Indeed that kingdom is yours if you will enter it. Its gates will open to such as you, whilst many of those regarded as your betters shall remain without. Happy are you, though many amongst you mourn ; for, however great your troubles, you may come to me and be truly comforted. Happy are you who meekly listen to my word, for the meek shall inherit the earth. Happy are you who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for I can give you heavenly and satisfying bread. Happy are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers ; for they shall obtain mercy, they shall see God, they shall be called the children of God. Yes, happy shall you be, even when persecuted for righteousness' sake and reviled for confession of my name. Under such conditions, yea on account of these things, you shall rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for so you will share the honours of the holy prophets and look forward to a glorious reward in the kingdom of heaven. However humbly you may think of yourselves, however meanly the world may think of you, my true and faithful followers are really the salt of the earth. See then that you lose not the genuine savour of purity and love which may check the corruptions of the age. You who faithfully receive my doctrine are, or ought to be, the light of the world. Men will certainly watch you. See, then, that your light shine to the glory of God.' Having thus exhorted and consoled those around him, Christ went on to correct some misrepresentations concerning himself. He was not come as a destroying

We are told to take Christ and the apostles for our examples. Then, I ask, was Christ in the sense in which we now use the phrase 'poor in spirit' ? Was Peter ? Was Paul ? Let anyone look to Matt. xv. 7 ; xxiii. 13-33 and many similar passages ; and Acts iv. 10, 19 ; xvi. 37 and say.

enemy to Moses' law, he taught them. He was going to fulfil it. Never should that law be done away till the objects for which it had been instituted should be perfectly, even to the smallest iota, accomplished. He explained the spirit of its various parts, and urged them not to indulge delay in attending to the things which made for their peace. He then taught them to do all in their power to benefit their fellow men, and required them to love even their enemies. He showed them how God, whose power and wrath it had been necessary to reveal in former dispensations, was really their beneficent Father, whose perfections they should strive to imitate. He warned them against ostentation—against doing good actions from bad motives—against hypocrisy. He taught them how to pray, and what to pray for. He gave them a prayer fit for universal use. He cautioned them against covetousness, against instability, against undue solicitude; and taught them that in seeking God's kingdom and righteousness they might rely on receiving all things really good from their Father in heaven. He told them not to think evil of others, and recommended them to look to their own defects rather than find fault with their neighbours. He showed how essential wisdom would be for his followers in their deportment before the world. Sound judgment would be found very necessary, for holy things were not to be paraded at improper seasons. He recommended them to make known their wants to God with confidence and faith, and to persevere in prayer to Him who would treat them as a wise and kind father would his children. He summed up many rules and precepts in the well-known words, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' He urged them to enter in at the strait gate leading to life, for he could see that many were going through the wide gate, and along the broad and easy way, leading to destruction.

He cautioned them against hypocrites and false prophets, and showed them how a tree of a good kind would not bring forth bad sorts of fruit—thorns and thistles would not bear grapes or figs. He cautioned them against insincerity towards himself, and declared that a day was coming when all the hollow ones who worked iniquity would be disowned by him and driven away from his presence, though they might have been high in station amongst his adherents, and have performed many wonderful works in his name. It was not enough merely to hear his words. Only those who heard and did them could be likened to the man who built his house on the rock and found it perfectly secure, always firm and unshaken in the face of the rain and against the floods and the winds. But those who heard his sayings and did them not, were ‘like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell. And great was the fall of it.’

A very rapid summary is all that could be given here of three of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible. What wonderful ability—if that is not too weak a word—is apparent through the whole of the instructive sayings which they detail! Was ever sermon delivered in which so much good was condensed? But other things have to be noticed. Here is a young untried man congratulating multitudes on their privilege of hearing his words! Here also is this provincial teacher, unauthorised by any Jewish ecclesiastical recognition, taking upon himself on his own authority to declare the meaning of the law of God. He scruples not again and again to use the expression, ‘But *I* say unto you.’* We also see his boldness in acknowledging the indifference which the mighty, the rich,

* The *ἐγώ* is used in chap. v. 22, 28, 34, 39, 44.

the dominant religionists of that time, showed to his cause; and in recognising the virtues of the poor and meek. But he avoided everything like flattery towards those who were receiving his instructions, and he said many things that ran counter to their prejudices. We also see his wisdom in supplying a prayer for his followers, which, though new as a whole, was mainly compiled from forms already in existence.* Must not the Spirit without measure have been given to him who could breathe life into this simple compendium and make it a prayer as well suited for modern Christendom as it was for the little flock chosen out of the world in the days of its framer? Lastly, we see how Christ proclaims himself as the future Judge who in some great day to come should point out those who were to be received into the kingdom of heaven, and those who were to be shut out. And in the awful parable with which he concludes, he takes on himself to declare that one class only of the men before him would be safe—those who heard his words and did them.

Astonished the people might well be at his doctrine. He taught them not like the Scribes, who referred all things to the authority of some predecessor who had said this or that. Christ made nothing of such traditions; but spoke as one having authority in himself.

SECTION XVI.—*The Cleansing of a Leper.*

(Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-44; Luke v. 12-14.)

In the words ‘I will,’ ‘Be clean,’ we see Christ’s compassion and consciousness of power. In his directions ‘Say nothing to any man,’ we see his indifference to applause; and in his orders, ‘Go show thyself to the priest,’

* With the exception of the clause ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.’

&c., we see his wisdom in providing that the cure should be certified by competent authority, and his reverence for an ordinance of God.

SECTION XVII.—*The Cure of the Paralytic at Capernaum.*

(Matt. ix. 2-8; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-26.)

Christ's first words to this paralytic were entirely unexpected by him, and must have astonished all present. The bearers of the sick man, and some others probably, did expect a cure; but here was something they had neither asked for nor thought of. The man might possibly have been as much burdened with the weight of his sin as distressed with the intensity of his disease. But there is nothing to show that such was the case. However that may be, we cannot be surprised at the Scribes' and Pharisees' exclamation following the announcement, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee!' Then came Christ's question, 'whether it was easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk?' And, to convince them that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the man, 'Rise, take up thy couch, and go unto thine house!'

Did Christ wish to impress on all around him the truth that sin is the root of all evil, the cause of all our diseases? Whether it were so or not, there can be no question that he took the occasion of putting before his audience in this startling way his own prerogative to forgive sins. Yet it was as the Son of man that he would do so. And this expression is used by him for the first time, as recorded in the Gospels, in connection with the forgiveness of sins. The representative of our race before God was a man. Though he had power to forgive sins, he was the first fruits of God's creation, bone of our bone, flesh of our

flesh, subject to all human feelings, exposed to all human temptations. Yet were not those right who said, 'Who can forgive sins but God only?'

SECTION XVIII.—*The Call of Matthew.*

(Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 14; Luke v. 27, 28.)

Christ, a harmless, spiritually-minded, undefiled man, a person of no fixed residence, engaged in preaching, said to a man of poor repute, engrossed in the prosecution of a very lucrative business, and sitting in the receipt of his gains, 'Follow me!' And the man started up, left all, and followed him.

Here we see the wonderful independence and boldness of Christ in choosing a man of Matthew's occupation. We see his discernment of character and foreknowledge of consequences. Above all, we must note the power which accompanied his word. What man that we know would immediately abandon a lucrative calling on hearing a sudden order to do so from any living person?

SECTION XIX.—*The Cure of an Impotent Man at the Pool of Bethesda, and Christ's Vindication of the Performance of what was thus done on the Sabbath Day.*

(John v. 1-47.)

Christ asked the man who had been a sufferer for eight-and-thirty years, 'Do you really wish to be restored to health?' The poor man made his desponding explanations; and Christ said to him, 'Rise up; lift your bed from the ground, and walk away with it.' We are told how the man obeyed; and that whilst he was proving the completeness of his cure by taking away that whereon he had been lying, he had to submit to the questionings of

the Jews, who blamed him for carrying a burden on the Sabbath day. He naturally made his healer responsible for the act, but knew not who he was. But Christ soon made himself known, and confirmed the cure by his words ; adding, ‘ Sin* no more, lest a worse thing come to you.’ The man told the Jews who his benefactor was, and they sought to persecute Christ on account both of what he had done and what he had made another do on the Sabbath day. But Christ, admitting that Moses had told them how God rested on the seventh day from creation, said, ‘ True, the evening and the morning of the sixth day have passed, and God has rested. Yet it is equally true that God still works. Hitherto, life and health are sustained by His active and almighty power. He who is incessantly healing your diseases has never made the Sabbath a day on which your health cannot be restored. And as my Father acts, so shall I. I will not be hindered by your narrowness of mind from performing my work of mercy when and as I choose.’ The Jews judged this to be the same as making himself equal with God, and therefore sought to kill him. Christ thereupon says not that they misunderstood him, he abates not one atom of his pretensions. On the contrary, he proceeds solemnly to assure them that he only did what he had seen the Father do ; he claims for himself the love of God as the love of ‘ the Father ’ to ‘ the Son ; ’ he asserts his possession of power to give life to whom he would, of sitting in judgment on all men, of raising the dead, and of enforcing the execution of his decrees upon them. For witness to himself he refers the Jews to John the Baptist, to his own works, and to God Himself. He blames the Jews for neither knowing God nor receiving His word. He refers also to the Scriptures for witness to himself, and reproves his accusers for not coming to him for life. He also exposes their desire of honour one from another.

Nevertheless, he had not come as their accuser—there was no occasion for his taking that office on himself. Their accuser was that very lawgiver for whom they professed such veneration. Moses, in whom they trusted, wrote of him; so that in rejecting one they were rejecting the other also. ‘But if,’ added Christ, ‘ye will not believe his writings, how shall ye believe my words?’

We see here, first the compassion of Christ for the poor impotent man, whom he cured without being even requested so to do, and whom he afterwards impressively admonished. Then we see what most remarkable claims Christ put forth when accused of breaking the Sabbath. There could be no mistake about the matter. The Jews were quite right in understanding that he made himself equal with God. But what an extraordinary and original line of defence was taken up by Christ! ‘By such works as mine I am no more breaking the Sabbath than God breaks it in sustaining your existence and renewing your bodily powers each Sabbath as well as every other morning in the week. There is work which is no infraction of my Father’s rest; and I shall do it as well as He.’ Then how lofty are all the claims that he goes on to make in this extraordinary defence! Who ever before pretended to have the power of giving life to the dead and of executing judgment upon all men? And who else has ever had any right to assert himself to be the prophet whose coming Moses had predicted?

SECTION XX.—*Christ’s Vindication of the Disciples for Rubbing out Ears of Corn on a Sabbath Day.*

(Matt. xii. 1-8; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-5.)

‘You accuse my poor followers,’ said Christ to the Pharisees, ‘of breaking the letter of the law by doing so

slight a work in order to satisfy the cravings of hunger and support nature whilst attending me. If this is a sin in them, what then was a much more irregular thing than this in your favourite hero, David? Yet the Scriptures do not blame either him for taking the shew-bread or the priest for giving it up for his men, though it was not lawful for any to eat it but the priests alone. Again, on the Sabbath the priests in the temple are obliged to do certain works in the course of their attendance on God's service. If work of any kind whatever on this day is a profanation of the Sabbath, they clearly profane it, and yet they are certainly blameless. Well, here is one in this place greater than the temple. A hearty following of me is more acceptable to God than any formal temple-service, and I will protect my servants from blame for whatever they do in their faithful attendance on me. Know that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. God delights in mercy rather than in sacrifices according to the letter of the law. Know, too, that the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath day.'

We see here the forwardness of Christ to take up the cause of his followers against the powerful; and we see the ready ability with which he put the earlier part of his defence of them in a form unanswerable by his adversaries, who, according to their own habits of reasoning, were thus completely vanquished. But Christ did not leave matters there. He continued the defence on higher grounds still, by the assertion of his own inherent dignity. When we remember the veneration the Jews entertained for the temple, we cannot imagine they would admit that any thing or any one below God Himself could be greater than that sacred place. Yet we see what Christ said. And we see how, as the Great Prophet, he goes on to teach what had never entered these people's minds

before, namely, that what God ordained He ordained for the benefit of mankind. Ordinances were made for the good of man; life was not given to the human race merely to provide God with men to submit to His ordinances. Then Christ declared that he, in his character of the first-born of God's creatures, the foremost of the sons of men for whose sake the Sabbath had been given to Israel, possessed lordly authority even over that day.

SECTION XXI.—*The Restoring of the Withered Hand on the Sabbath Day.*

(Matt. xii. 9-15; Mark iii. 1-7; Luke vi. 6-11.)

Christ, knowing the thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees, commanded the miserable object before him to stand forth in sight of all present. He then appealed to their own usual course of action. They themselves never scrupled to restore to conditions of health and liberty, whenever they could, any valuable animal of their own, such as one of their sheep, for instance, which they would pull out of a pit on the Sabbath day. Why, then, should he not restore a fellow man to health whenever occasion required. Was not a man better than a sheep? Was it lawful to save life as he was proposing to do in the case of a human being, or to destroy it, as they perhaps were plotting to do in his case? They could not answer. He then in conscious power said to the crippled man, 'Stretch forth thine hand.'

Here we see again an instance of the consummate wisdom of Christ in dealing with his detractors. We note also the conscious power without which he could not have ordered the poor man to stretch forth his hand.

SECTION XXII.—*Beatitudes, Woes, and Warnings, Recorded by Luke (alike in some degree to certain parts of the Sermon on the Mount).*

(Luke vi. 20-49.)

No one can suppose it improbable that in the course of his ministration in many parts and on different occasions, Christ should have repeated the same or similar instructions, with variations suited to the several circumstances or conditions of his hearers. Thus we have the Sermon on the Mount given us in Matthew, and also this discourse recorded by Luke. One is very like, but by no means the same as, the other. One Gospel is much fuller on the present subject than the other, yet the latter contains things that the former does not. In the passage now before us, those who were actually poor amongst his disciples, those of them who had scarce enough to satisfy their appetite, those who were hated for the Son of man's sake, were called happy. Times were at hand when the rich and insolent and self-flatterers in Judea, should have cause for lamentation and sorrowing; when the luxurious should be brought to shame; and the merciless should in vain seek the pity of their conquerors, for they should be subdued by a people stronger than they; when the imperious should be laughed to scorn and sold as slaves among the heathen. Christ, it must be repeated, spoke of men as he saw them, of persons whose condition he knew. We certainly cannot say that all the poor around ourselves, and that all those now in bad repute are blessed. And we know that amongst the rich* and those who abound in great temporal advantages are many of the excellent of the earth.

* What rich men too often were in the times of the New Testament writers we learn from the Epistle of James. But even then there were exceptions.

Those whom Christ called blessed were the men who used their opportunities of hearing his words and of acting upon them.

It is needless for us here to retrace the lineaments which the 'Sermon on the Mount' revealed to us. Suffice it to say, that now we have an additional feature in a bold defiance and denunciation of the oppressive and arrogant rich. They and all who were flattered by their fellow-men were warned of future calamities, which the previous possession of wealth and undeserved reputation would but enhance. We have also here the boldness, energy, and faithfulness of a great teacher, and the judgments of one of authority.

SECTION XXIII.—*The Cure of the Centurion's Servant.*

(Matt. viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 1-10.)

Christ offered to go and heal the servant. But the good centurion, in his well-known words of humility and faith, stayed him. Christ marvelled at the man, and turning to those around him exclaimed, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!' And then, instead of humouring the prejudices of those to whom he was more immediately sent, he scrupled not to tell them that a participation in the happiness and privileges of their own patriarchs should be accorded to many of the heathen, whilst the children of the kingdom should be thrust outside into the regions of darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth. He then graciously said to the worthy and kind-hearted Roman, 'Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.'

Here we see again Christ's ready benevolence and confidence in his own power. Here we must note that the

foresight of future events so often communicated to him whilst on earth, did not prevent his being affected with surprise. He seems no more than any of his followers to have expected the good Roman's answer. Then we must note the resolution he showed in saying what must have been unpleasant to those around him. He never objected to utter unpalatable truth. We see also his fore-knowledge of the designs of God.

SECTION XXIV.—*The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain.*

(Luke vii. 11-17.)

Christ said to the poor widow, 'Weep not!' But his words would have had little or no value or effect if he had not immediately touched the bier on which her dead son was being borne to the burial-ground, and said, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.'

Here we see the tenderness of Christ, and also his consciousness of power, even to raise the dead.

SECTION XXV.—*The Answer to John's Messengers, and Discourse afterwards to the People concerning John.*

(Matt xi. 2-19; Luke vii. 18-35.)

We might have expected that the answer to the question sent by the Baptist would have consisted either of a reproof, if John's faith were wavering; or of a direct declaration by Christ of his character and the nature of his work, if John had sent more for the sake of others than of himself. But we find neither. After doing some wonderful works before the eyes of the two messengers, Christ bade them relate to John what they had seen and also what they had heard. He makes reference apparently to a passage in Isaiah (xxxv. 4, 5), and claims to be the

personage whose coming the prophet had predicted; and then adds, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' To comprehend all this we ought to consider how matters stood at the moment. John was under heavy trial—shut off from his work. Christ was increasing, but not in the way his faithful forerunner had expected. He himself was decreasing, but not in the position he had perhaps hoped, as the fellow-labourer and honoured companion of his Lord—a luminary always, only paled by a superior and more brilliant light. No, there he was, thrust aside and obscured, whilst the man whom he had pointed out as the great Saviour was performing wonderful works and allowing his illustrious herald to be cast into Herod's dungeon and to lie there silenced and unnoticed. We should not have expected this, and we cannot wonder that the Baptist, who, with all his rugged indifference to the world's usages, and sublime self-denial, was but a man, should at length have determined to send some communication to Christ. The precise object of the message is not clear, and the object of Christ's return-message appears most plainly in the last part of it, where Christ seems to say, 'There always will be circumstances attending the faith in me which shall cause disquietude and shall appear at the moment unaccountable. But be assured. Maintain your confidence. You shall have no cause to regret your steadfastness at the last. However dark things may look at present or for the future, blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. Bitter and mysterious disappointments may oppress my faithful servant. He whose word all Jerusalem once went to hear—the austere prophet on whom a deputation of priests, Levites, and Pharisees had respectfully waited—he to whose baptism the Messiah had himself submitted—must have his life made the sport of a dancing girl. His only release from prison is to be a violent death. Well, for all

this, he must not be offended! His existence he only values as far as it can be devoted to the service of God. He cannot penetrate the divine designs, but he may know that by his imprisonment at this stage of his course, and by his approaching death, he will glorify God more than he now could in any other way. Let him remember the words I once addressed to him, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Christ having done what he thought fit before John's disciples, and told them what to report to their master, dismissed them. But then he seems no longer to have been able to contain his admiration of the Baptist's greatness. 'What went ye out into the wilderness to see?' he exclaimed, and then declared, 'Among those that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist;' yet he added, 'he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And that kingdom is not a state established on narrow and exclusive principles. It is not closed to all but a select few. Its honours and treasures are the prize of all who have the energy to seize them. Notwithstanding the perversity of the generation, there are those who already begin to press into it. Up to John's time the law and the prophets have been made the inheritance of the sons of one patriarch only. But now that the course of him who was predicted under Elijah the prophet's name is well-nigh finished, the heart of the fathers and the heart of the children may be turned to the Lord throughout the whole creation. God shall be proclaimed as Lord over the whole earth, and all men may become the subjects of His everlasting kingdom. But, alas! there are descendants of Jacob on whom neither John nor myself can make impression. Like children in the market-place who will neither dance nor weep, they cannot be moved by the austerities of John, nor attracted by the social amiability of the Son of man. You say that John had a devil, because he never

joined in your feasts and never tasted wine. You say that I am a gluttonous man and a winebibber, because I sit down to eat and to drink with you at your tables. But wisdom is justified of her children. Though one may act in one way, and another in another, they will do what is right under the circumstances and in the positions in which they find themselves, and their proceedings shall at length be vindicated before God and man.'

We see here first Christ's superiority to, or perfect independence of, all the conventional rules, one might even say amiable observances, that guide good men in their treatment of others, and which Christ's followers cannot afford to neglect. But he who was love itself took upon himself to decide how he would treat one and not another person. He knew that John had the testimony of his conscience, and that was enough for him till the great Judge of all should say, 'Well done!' And so the admiration that we should have thought would have comforted the faithful servant silenced in prison was withheld till his messengers had departed.

We then see what infinite super-eminence Christ claims for the dispensation he was come to establish. To John he assigns a rank higher than any attained by man up to his time. 'But the least who can claim membership in the kingdom I am founding,' said Christ, 'is greater than he.' We see also how Christ as a true man among men chose to associate with those around him; ready not only to alleviate the griefs of mourners, but to enhance the innocent pleasures of those who rejoiced.

SECTION XXVI.—*Denunciation of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum ; and Invitation to the Weary and Heavy-laden.*

(Matt. xi. 20-30.)

Then Christ began to upbraid the cities in which his mighty works had been principally done, because they had nevertheless repented not. It should be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and for Sodom in its Day of judgment than for them. He then acknowledged the justice of his Father, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who was pleased to hide from men who trusted in their wisdom and education—from doctors full of rabbinical learning, and scribes and elders exulting in their knowledge of the law—the heavenly things which were discerned by the teachable, and revealed unto babes. He added that all things were delivered unto him by the Father, who alone knew the Son. ‘Neither knoweth any one the Father,’ said Christ, ‘save the Son, and he to whom the Son pleaseth to reveal Him.’ Who, then, were those to whom he was specially willing to make known the loving kindness of the Father? Christ tells us in his closing words—in the invitation which has brought comfort to many a troubled heart, ‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest! Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Here Christ exalts his own dignity to the greatest height by the declaration that the neglect of his word and of a proper consideration of his works was an offence more fatal than the sin of Sodom and the enmity of Tyre and Sidon. He afterwards declared that all things were put in his hands by the Father—that the Son had power to reveal the

knowledge of the Father, but that no being in the whole universe but the Father could know the Son! An assertion that demands our wondering consideration. So also, were we not so used to the familiar words, we should wonder how a man in Christ's apparent circumstances, and with a self-proclaimed character for meekness and lowliness, could have taken upon himself to declare that he would give rest to the souls of all the heavy laden who should come to him for it. Do we know of any living man who would engage to do this? It must be remarked, too, that Christ would only receive such applicants on the condition that they must submit to his rule and do his work, easy though his yoke and light though his burden might be.

SECTION XXVII.—*Vindication of the Act of a Penitent Sinner, and Acceptance of her Love.*

(Luke vii. 36-50.)

With what object in view we know not, a Pharisee named Simon had invited Christ to eat with him. Supposing that his guest, like himself, would certainly show outward signs of abhorrence and contempt for the person of one recognised as having been erring and frail, he thought he had now an opportunity of disparaging the new teacher; for a prophet would have known the character of the woman, and a holy man would not have suffered himself to be polluted with her touch. But Christ, answering the thoughts of his designing host, said, 'Simon, I have a case to put before you. A creditor had two debtors, the one owing him ten times as much as the other, and he frankly forgave them both. Now, tell me, which of them will love him most?' There could be but one answer, and Simon was forced to give it. Christ then said to him, 'You have rightly judged—he to whom the creditor forgave most.' Then, turning his face, that he

might indicate the weeping creature who had been behind him as he reclined at table, he added, 'You see this woman, and you have noticed what she has been about. Now you know that at your own invitation I came to this house. Yet when I put off my sandals you offered no water wherewith to refresh my feet. But she has washed them with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You greeted me with no friendly salutation, but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. You failed to provide even the ordinary oil for the head of your guest, but she has anointed my feet with a costly ointment. And I tell you that her sins, which I know, as well as you, to be many, are forgiven; for she has shown that great love which, by your own admission, an absolved debtor who has owed much ought to feel. You, Simon, do not consider that you have owed much, and very little love indeed have you accordingly shown.' Then, addressing the woman, he said plainly, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.'

We see by the penitent's conduct what power Christ possessed of engaging the personal affection of those who received his word. We see also how he knew this woman's character and circumstances as well as he had known those of the woman he spoke to at Jacob's Well. We note his compassion, and find how he could accept acts of tender humble love without making light of sin. We see the wonderful wisdom and dignity with which by the parable of the two debtors he rebuked his unworthy host, vindicated his own conduct, and asserted his claims. For by the parable and his superadded words to the woman, he plainly claimed the position of the Being she had sinned against. And yet the penitent is not represented as loving God abstractedly, so much as Christ individually.* And,

* Perhaps it is right to say that the parable is more one of special than

after all, he told the woman that it was neither her love nor her tears that had saved her, but her faith in himself personally. Then his final words could have had no value if he had not claimed the power of admitting to peace whomsoever he would.

SECTION XXVIII.—*Answer to Imputations of the Pharisees and Scribes.*

(Matt. xii. 22-45; Mark iii. 22-30; Luke xi. 14, 15, 17-28.)

Christ's detractors, not being able to deny that he had the power of casting out demons, made the insinuation that he was in league with Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. Christ called these persons to him, made them stand face to face with him, and then asked them several things to which they could give no reply. He adapted his argument to the habits of thought, feelings, and manners of the Jews around him; and he taught that a wilful misrepresentation of his acts of goodness, performed by virtue of the Spirit of God, was something more than a pardonable offence against the Son of man. It was a sin against the Holy Ghost; which, because thereby the offender obstinately set himself against the goodness of God, could not be forgiven. The indwelling of this Spirit of goodness was in Christ. Having this as the source of wisdom and spring of action, his words and

of general application, being directly designed to extort from Simon an admission that damaged self-complacency and rebuked Pharisaic contempt. We are not to be taught by it that those who have been the greatest sinners will, when overcome by the love of Christ, serve God better and attain a better degree hereafter, than the faithful ones who have never wandered from the right way. Simon exalted his own character, as immeasurably above that of the poor woman. It is not said that his estimate was right, but even if it had been, Christ was justified in accepting the penitent's act of love. Yet as far as concerned effective service, if Simon had but turned to Christ, what might he not have done for the good cause! What treasures might he not have laid up in heaven!

deeds were good. It was the party of his opponents that was in league with evil. The evil things that came from the evil treasure within them proved this. A man's character might be in great measure judged of by his sayings. Words were not unimportant things. Even idle or common words, spoken in the ordinary intercourse of human life, would be weighed in the balance hereafter, and be approved or condemned. In fact, by the general tenour and drift of his words a man might be justified or condemned. What a serious thing it was, then, to utter such malicious and untruthful imputations as those which had just come out of their corrupt and evil hearts! Then, in answer to a good woman, who could not suppress an estimation of the felicity of her who had given birth to the speaker of such admirable words, Christ exclaimed, 'Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!'

Here we perceive again Christ's wisdom in choosing an effectual method for silencing his adversaries. Though we may in these days and from our points of view be unable to appreciate modes of reasoning peculiar to the Jews of those times, men of all conditions, men in every age, can recognise the beauty of Christ's reply to the admiring woman, unmatched as it is for graceful readiness and propriety. But it seems to me it is more than beautiful and appropriate; for does it not contain an assertion that the teaching of Christ was indeed the 'Word of God'?

SECTION XXIX.—*Christ's Answer to the Pharisees who demanded a Sign from Heaven, and his Declaration that there were Relationships dearer to him than those of Mother and Brethren according to the Flesh.*

(Matt. xii. 38-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke xi. 16, 24-26, 29-36;
viii. 19-21.)

Christ intimated that it was a proof of an evil and adulterous generation to seek after a sign. Nevertheless, he would give them one that they might remember hereafter, though they would not understand its perfect application now. Jonah in old times had been three days and three nights in the whale's belly; and so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Jonah had preached to the Ninevites, and they had repented. A greater than Jonah was preaching to the men of that generation, but they repented not. A queen once travelled an immense distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon. A greater than Solomon was uttering the words of wisdom amongst the men of that generation, but they repented not. They prided themselves on having got rid of the unclean spirit of idolatry: their house was swept clear of its old impurities: they had embellished it in their own estimation with garnishings of legal observances and rabbinical traditions. But, being empty of better things, it was only made ready for a sevenfold possession of spirits more malignant than the one which had gone out of it before; so their last state should be worse than the first. The Pharisees, and others who acted with them, were disposed to go all lengths to put the teaching of Christ in the background. But he would by no means submit to that. He had lighted a candle; and, so far from intending to put it down into a crypt where no one ever went, he would take care to set it up so that every one might see its light. But the understanding

itself might be prejudiced. The eye might itself look askance; and they must take heed to receive the light not distortedly and confusedly, but simply in the fulness of its bright shining; for only so should they be truly enlightened. It then happened that Christ was interrupted by the interference of some who told him that his mother and his brethren desired to speak with him. We must remember that his brethren believed not in him till after his resurrection, and we must conclude that an effort was at this time made to stay his teaching. He therefore said, 'Who is my mother? who are my brethren?' Then, stretching forth his hands towards his disciples, he exclaimed, 'My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God and do it!'

We see here that Christ calls himself greater than one of the old prophets—greater than even the wise and renowned King Solomon. He also boldly accuses the Jews of wickedness, and prophesies evil of them. He also gives proof of his entire independence, and his disregard of the wishes and feelings of his dearest relations, when they would interfere for a moment with his work. He also shows his condescension and tender regard for his humble followers in placing them in the dignified position of nearest and most affectionate relationship to himself.

SECTION XXX.—*The Parable of the Sower, and Reasons given for speaking to the People in Parables.*

(Matt. xiii. 1-23; Mark iv. 1-20; Luke viii. 4-15.)

We now come to the parable of the sower—the first of a series of seven important parables,* delivered by Christ

* It may be well here to give the definition of 'parable' in the words of one who has put forth by very far the most useful 'critical and exe-

on one day. Every one is perfectly familiar with the great parable before us. When it had been delivered, Christ was asked privately by his disciples why he spoke to the people in parables; and from his statement in reply, it appears that he intended at that period to conceal from the great multitude of his countrymen the mysteries which they were not in a state to receive. At the same time, instruction of high importance was conveyed to them in a way they would not be likely to forget.

The parables of Christ are so familiar to us that men in general think no more about them than of the water that serves for their drink and cleansing, and the air they unconsciously breathe. Yet no one who attentively examines them can fail to be struck with their great appropriateness and simple beauty. What wisdom was that which seized on illustrations that could beneficially impress ignorant multitudes of Jews, and men of all ranks and conditions, uninstructed and learned, to the present day! What perfection of mental power was that which could furnish these imperishable vehicles of purest truth without forcing on the common people the consideration of things too high for their gross understandings!

SECTION XXXI.—*Six other Parables.*

(Matt. xiii. 24-52.)

Christ proceeded to deliver the parables of ‘the tares among the wheat,’ ‘the grain of mustard seed,’ ‘the leaven,’ ‘the treasure hid in a field,’ ‘the pearl of great price,’ and ‘the net cast into the sea.’ If they all refer

getical Commentary’ on the ‘Greek Testament’ that I have been able to meet with:—‘*A parable is a serious narration, within the limits of probability, of a course of action pointing to some moral or spiritual truth, and derives its force from real analogies impressed by the Creator of all things on His creatures.*’—*Dean Alford, in loco.*

to the state of the dispensation introduced by Christ, called by him 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' and by us 'the Christian Church throughout the world,' as it seems perfectly obvious that they do, no one who examines them can deny the truthfulness with which they describe what has been going on, at least since the day of Pentecost up to this present time.

Besides the things remarked in the last section, which all apply equally here, we may note the vivifying energy and the majestic power and dignity which Christ now claims for himself (before his disciples) as the Son of man. It is *he* who sows the good seed; it is *he* who shall finally send forth his angels.

SECTION XXXII.—*The Parable of the Blade, and the Ear, and the Full Corn in the Ear.*

(Mark iv. 26-29.)

I put this by itself, as only Mark relates it. But some of the foregoing observations will very well adapt themselves thereto.

SECTION XXXIII.—*Answers to three different Persons who offered, or were invited, to follow Christ.*

(Matt. viii. 19-22; Luke ix. 57-62.)

Luke's account, which I shall here prefer, leads us to understand that these answers were given at the commencement of Christ's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, when he was so far making a kind of 'royal progress' as to send messengers before his face to the different places he had to pass through. Christ and his company were already on the way, when a certain scribe, seeing the powerful body of men in willing attendance, and believing

that Christ would succeed in obtaining the chief power in the State, and in establishing a great kingdom on earth,—impressed also no doubt with the wisdom and force of his words—offered to follow him anywhere. ‘You are thinking,’ said Christ, ‘of earthly advantages, ease and splendour. But the Son of man has abjured all thought of such things as these. My work is one that cannot be done without submission to great hardship. Mine is a life of such self-sacrifice, that my immediate followers cannot by any possibility enjoy much of what the world calls pleasure and comfort: for in my labours and journeyings, *I know not one day where I shall find food and lodging the next, and my followers must expect no better a condition.** I am as a commander of an army in a rough campaign, making forced marches in an enemy’s country. And this warfare will only end with my life; and those about me now must engage in it whilst their lives last.’

But on another man, who had probably peculiar fitness for the work, Christ pressed its extreme urgency. Not only convenience, but natural feeling, must be sacrificed to the requirements of such a service. The occasion was unprecedented. The great leader himself was waiting in the course of his progress for this recruit. ‘Let the ordinary concerns of life and death,’ said he, ‘be attended to by those whom I do not require as my personal followers. But as for you, a man honoured by my own direct choice, show yourself a ready herald, come at once, and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ To another who offered to follow him, he would not so much as allow time for going to his relations to bid them farewell, or for putting his affairs in order. ‘No,’ said Christ, ‘my work is now progressing,

* The words in *italics* are from Doddridge, and, in my opinion, express much more accurately the meaning of the passage than does the turn given to it immediately before by that expositor, when he speaks of the ‘low circumstances’ of Christ.

and it will admit of no carelessness, indifference, or delay. Your friends or your affairs may keep you at home for an indefinite time, and I may have passed on before your return. You can choose as you like between them and me; only if you decide in taking my work, I warn you at once, there must be no turning again after what we leave behind us now. No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for working with me in the kingdom of God.'

We see here a wonderful insight into men's different characters. Christ knew where to check one and urge another. We see also that he did not mind appearing arbitrary and exacting on certain occasions. There does seem a kind of harshness about the words just considered, that we should not have expected from one who was meek and lowly, who promised rest, and called his yoke an easy one. But Christ claims to be the true light. Now we know the natural pure ray to be made up of very different elementary colours. Shall we find, as we proceed, that the Gospels present us with an analysis of the light of God shining from the face of Jesus Christ? Shall we see that its perfectly distinct hues may be gathered into one harmonious beam? But, however this may be, it is undeniable that Christ is represented here as claiming the whole affection of some persons for himself, and the whole devotion of their time to his service. He considered the urgency supremely pressing. He regarded himself at that moment in the light of a Master, Leader, and Ruler, entering on a war in which there was no discharge, a contest of life and death for the purpose of overcoming evil and establishing an everlasting kingdom. But those chosen to command under him should, after they had laboured and fought, have an eternal reward—they should, after all, have their rest.

SECTION XXXIV.—*The Stilling of a Tempest on the Lake.*

(Matt. viii. 23-27; Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25.)

When the disciples, seeing themselves in jeopardy, awoke Christ who was asleep in the hinder part of their fragile skiff, he said, 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the raging of the water, and said, 'Peace, be still!'

Why should Christ have reprovingly asked those around him where was their faith, merely because they thought they might be drowned at that particular time? The sole reason was that he, though asleep, was with them. The faith of which he spoke was not a general faith in God, however strong. For that sort of faith Josiah and some prophets had, who yet met with a violent death during the performance of their duty. What Christ must have indicated was a faith in himself personally—a faith which would have made them certain that no harm could happen to him against his will, and that death could not come upon him till he had finished his work. Now, they knew that neither his nor their work had been done. The vessel with him on board was therefore safe; and they being in it with him, could not be drowned. According to New Testament history, this must have been the state of the case; because in after times the apostles' faith was perfectly strong, and yet they were exposed to bodily injury and violent death. But whilst Christ was with them in person, no storm should have frightened their faith away. In this view of the matter, the claims of Christ appear as lofty when he asked, 'Where is your faith?' as when he said, 'Peace, be still!' and the winds and the sea obeyed him.

SECTION XXXV.—*The Cure of the Demoniac in the Country of the Gadarenes.*

(Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-40.)

When the demons possessing the fierce naked man in the tombs had cried out in acknowledgment of the power whose presence they felt, Christ said, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ He added, ‘What is thy name?’ ‘Legion,’ was the answer, and the demons asked if they might enter a herd of swine hard by; and Christ said, ‘Go.’ We know what curious events are stated to have followed, and how the man whom no one before had been able to tame, was now found sitting at the feet of Christ, clothed, and in his right mind, and praying that he might remain by the side of his benefactor. But Christ suffered him not, and directed him to go home to his friends and tell them what the Lord had done for him, and what great mercy he had shown him.

Besides Christ’s compassion, we see in this extraordinary narrative what absolute power he claimed over demons. We further see his prudence in the injunctions laid on the person relieved. Either this poor man was not fitted by nature or circumstances to be one of Christ’s heralds, or Christ did not judge that the general publication of this wonderful work of his would at that time subserve his cause. Therefore he commanded the affectionately grateful man to tell his own friends about it, and not the world at large.

SECTION XXXVI.—*The Feast at Levi’s House.*

(Matt. ix. 10-17; Mark ii. 15-22; Luke v. 29-39.)

When the scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christ’s disciples, saying, ‘How is it that your master

eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?’ Christ said, ‘They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.’ Christ also defended his disciples when their conduct was called in question because they fasted not as the disciples of John and of the Pharisees did. Those who were invited to attend a marriage ceremony could not mourn and fast as long as the bridegroom was with them, said Christ. But when he should be removed away, then would they fast in those days. The old Jewish and traditional system of abstinence from this and from that, of fast days and feast days, might be likened to an old threadbare garment, or to old and weak wine-skins. To put new cloth into the one and new wine into the others would not only be to do no good, but to make mischief. At the same time Christ acknowledged that the unwillingness of the Jews to change their system for a new dispensation could not be wondered at; for no one drinking old wine of a quality he had been long accustomed to, would be immediately persuaded to leave it for new. Though told that it was of a superior kind, the man would say the old suited him better.

In the former part of this section we see compassion and wisdom combined in the words of Christ. In the subsequent defence of his immediate followers there can be no doubt that Christ pointed to himself under the image of the Bridegroom. As that personage is the principal one in a marriage assembly, so did Christ claim to be chief amongst those who joined his community. He thus also recognised the title his great precursor, the Baptist, had given him. And we do not forget that there is a Bridegroom in the Psalms, whose throne is that of God which is for ever and ever—a Bridegroom who is the Lord to be wor-

shipped, whose name was to be remembered in all generations, whom the people should praise for ever and ever. And there are passages in the prophets, where God himself is called the 'Husband.' Can we suppose that these Scriptures had clean gone from Christ's memory when he spoke of himself as the Bridegroom?

SECTION XXXVII.—*The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus from the Dead; and the Cure of a Diseased Woman by a Touch of Christ's Garment; and the Restoration of Sight to two Blind Men.*

(Matt. ix. 18-31; Mark v. 22-43; Luke viii. 41-56.)

After the affecting appeal of the ruler of the synagogue, and whilst the compassionate healer was on his way, he stayed, to the distress of the anxious father, and persisted in asking who it was that had touched him. But could he know what might happen during those precious moments? Whilst he was thus lingering the dear child might die! But these considerations seemed not to affect Christ, who went on talking with a hesitating woman. He affirmed that an energising virtue had gone out of him; and she was at length obliged to confess that his clothes had been purposely touched by her, and that she had been cured immediately. Then Christ comforted the poor shrinking creature, and told her that her faith had made her whole. In the meantime the dreaded news came from the ruler's house. His little daughter's life had indeed departed. The master's delay had been fatal, and he could be of no use now. But Christ said to the poor father, 'Be not afraid, only believe!' And when he came to the house, he said to the mourners and minstrels, 'Give place! The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.' Then, careless of their ridicule and disregarding their assertions, he entered the room with only the father and mother and his own atten-

dants; and taking the damsel by the hand, said, 'Talitha cumi!' ('Maiden! arise!') And he commanded that something should be given her to eat.

After leaving the house, Christ, being followed by two blind men crying, 'Son of David! have mercy on us!' asked them, 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' And on their answering, 'Yes,' said, 'According to your faith, be it unto you,' at the same time touching their eyes, which were immediately opened.

We see here how in these separate cases Christ made as many astonishing miracles depend on faith on himself personally. Far from rebuking the poor trembling woman for thinking it possible that virtue would come out of his person if she could but touch his clothes, he told her that this very faith of hers had saved her. If she had not had this conviction, she would have had no more benefit from him than any one else in the press received. So, too, he said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Only believe.' Believe what? In the existence and goodness of God? Many a father had believed in the God of Israel and yet had lost a beloved child. No, the ruler was to believe in Christ's personal ability. And so the poor blind men were asked, not, 'Do you believe in God's power?' but, 'Do you believe that I, the person speaking to you, am able to do this?' We see also how he accepted the title of 'Son of David.'

SECTION XXXVIII.—*A Visit of Christ to Nazareth, and Words of Compassion towards the Multitude.*

(Matt. xiii. 54-58; ix. 36-38; Mark vi. 1-6.)

The men of Nazareth could not but be struck with the wisdom and astonished at the mighty works of Christ. Nevertheless, being familiar with his family and having had him among them through the stages of childhood,

youth, and early manhood, having even seen him assisting in the trade of Joseph as a carpenter, they would not believe that he could be any better or greater than themselves. They were offended at what they persuaded themselves was his presumption in rising above their own level. Christ recognised this vulgar feeling and left them under the influence of their ignominious weakness. We are told that, afterwards, going about teaching and preaching in many cities, villages, and synagogues, and healing all manner of sickness and every disease, he was moved with compassion on the multitudes and said to his disciples, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.'

We see here how Christ could make allowance for what was natural in men. Also how, knowing the work that would have to be done, and melting with compassion on those who were scattered as sheep having no shepherd, he chose to quicken the zeal of his followers by the utterance of one of those undying expressions which remain as words of power amongst men, and will not cease to be effective till the final ingathering of the harvest of the world.

SECTION XXXIX.—*Instructions to the Twelve on their being constituted Apostles, and receiving a Temporary Commission to Proclaim the Kingdom of God, and effect Miraculous Cures in Judea.*

(Matt. x. 1-12; Mark vi. 7-11; Luke ix. 1-6.)

Christ now sent forth * the twelve disciples to go on a mission by themselves—that is, without his bodily presence and direction. The peculiar nature of the service

* ἀπέστειλεν from ἀποστέλλω (in English letters *apostello*).

on which they were at this time despatched, required that they should abstain from proclaiming the kingdom to Gentiles, or even to Samaritans. The kingdom was indeed to be a universal one, but its foundation would best be laid in Israel. So to the common stock of the father of the twelve tribes these twelve apostles were then to go, as men visiting amongst their relatives, and accepting a welcome as such. More than this, they could claim their kindred's hospitality in return for the great news which they had to give, and the gifts of healing which they brought. Christ ordered, therefore, that they should not provide themselves with any of the usual necessities for a journey. But he animated them with a sense of the dignity of their office, declaring even that it would be counted a great crime to reject them. He guaranteed them divine protection and assistance, and told them not to quail at the threats of men, however powerful, or allow their faith to be disturbed by persecutions. To be confessed hereafter by Christ before his heavenly Father would be more than sufficient recompense for troubles and death. And he engaged that this recompense should be enjoyed by those who confessed him before men. He assured them that no real harm should come to them from devotion to his service. God, whose providence regulated the course of all things, even to the existence of sparrows, would never cease to take account of His faithful servants. Their comforts and troubles, rise and decline, life and death were all arranged by Him. They need not fear then for a hair of their heads; they were of more value than many sparrows. But he warned them that how peaceful soever should be the permanent character and objects of his kingdom, its establishment would not be effected without much accompanying confusion, great disorders, variances, and wars. They must not look for immediate peace, merely because his kingdom was peace.

They must be prepared for the most painful differences with those nearest and dearest to them; for Christ must be loved more than father or mother, son or daughter. Those who were not prepared to carry their own cross were not worthy of him. A life here of the greatest success would be a lost life if not spent for him; whilst the highest and grandest object of human existence would be secured by devotion to his service; a life always held at his disposal, a readiness to sacrifice all personal comforts and considerations for him. But then how honourable was their position! for he gave them to understand that any one who sincerely showed them kindness out of regard to their work and office would be rewarded in just the same way as if the service had been rendered to Christ himself.

We see throughout these directions the wisdom of Christ in adapting the means to the end, and acting as circumstances required at that particular stage of his work. His disciples were quite unfit at that time to go amongst the Gentiles; but they might tell of Christ and his kingdom amongst their equals in their own country. And seed may have been sown by them on that expedition which bore fruit when, after the Pentecost following the crucifixion, they had something more definite to say. We note also throughout this charge its remarkable tones of independent authority; and Christ's assertion of an absolute and paramount claim to the devotion of man—body, soul, and spirit—to himself.

SECTION XL.—*The Retreat to the Wilderness after the Death of John the Baptist, and the subsequent Miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand.*

(Matt. xiv. 12–23; Mark vi. 29–46; Luke ix. 10–17; John vi. 1–14.)

Two distinct things may have influenced Christ in thus retiring to a desert place—namely, the advantage the twelve would have from resting a while, and from the enjoyment of quiet converse with him after the first independent and successful exercise of their apostolic functions; and also the need he himself felt of retirement on receiving intelligence of a very awful event which deeply affected him. For a frightful deed had been done. Christ's forerunner, one than whom no greater had arisen born of woman under the old dispensation, a relative according to the flesh, had been barbarously murdered to save the position and false honour of a tyrant of abandoned character, and to please the malice of a dissolute woman. We have seen that Christ had not thought fit to interpose with any mighty work for the rescue of John from prison, and had not found it good even to send him any very explicit message of comfort there when an opportunity offered. We might accordingly have thought that now he would have said, 'We must not allow this event, sad as it is, to cause us any loss of time; we must proceed with our work as usual. John himself would not have wished it delayed.' But it was not so; it seems that the tender feelings of Christ's human nature had received a shock. A great man had fallen. Christ had done him honour in words, and now he would show regard to the memory of the messenger of God by suspending his work and the activity of his agents for a while. But the people gave him no rest, and were soon flocking thoughtlessly about him again, so that Christ, after much teaching and

healing, found a great company around him so totally unprovided as to be in danger of famine. 'Whence shall we buy bread,' he said to Philip, 'that these may eat?' Then after a few more words with his confused disciples, and after having ordered the five barley loaves and two small fishes, all the provision that could be mustered, to be brought to him, and commanded that the vast multitude should be seated in order on the green grass, in ranks by hundreds and by fifties, he performed the great miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with that scanty store. And when they were filled, he said, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.'

We see in the early part of this section one of two things—either the wisdom of Christ's care for his disciples after the excitement of their mission, or else the way in which the soul of the Son of man was affected by the best sympathies of our nature. It is quite possible, however, that both these motives may have combined in influencing Christ's determination—the latter, perhaps, predominating. At all events, in deciding for an interval of rest, Christ showed the thorough independence of his character. From some of his sayings we should not have been led to expect an allowance from him of any cessation from labour. As we proceed with the section, we must note the calm and systematic directions that he gave, showing the perfect confidence he felt in his power to perform the great miracle recorded by all the Evangelists. They prove also how easily he could have organised any body of men if he had wished, for any purpose of self-aggrandisement. They show his love of order and regularity. And his last injunction about the fragments proves both the care he took in demonstrating the greatness and reality of the miracle and his abhorrence of wanton waste. And another instance is thereby given of his determination never to exert needlessly his miraculous powers.

SECTION XLI.—*The Walking on the Sea.*

(Matt. xiv. 24-33; Mark vi. 47-52; John. vi. 16-21.)

The words recorded as actually spoken by Christ on this occasion are few. First, those by which he allayed the terrors of his disciples when they thought they saw a spirit, and cried out for fear. 'Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid.' Then, the permissive 'Come,' by which he allowed Peter to go to him walking on the water: and lastly, the words to the sinking disciple, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'

We see here, first, that the only means Christ took for quieting the fears of his disciples consisted in assuring them that he was near. It was no spirit that appeared to them; it was Christ himself, who, to help them, had come walking on the water. And then, after letting the venturesome but loving Peter show both his courage and his weakness, he rebuked his wavering disciple for harbouring a doubt of his protection. Leave had been given him to join Christ out of the ship. Perfect faith maintained in his master would have kept away the fear which left Peter as helpless, but for Christ's supporting hand, as Samson was before the Philistines when his locks were shorn. The words to Peter certainly indicate that an unhesitating faith would have kept him firm and safe on the surface of the stormy sea as long as Christ was there also. Another instance of the requirement made of implicit faith.

SECTION XLII.—*The Discourse at Capernaum to the People after the Miracle of the Loaves.*

(John vi. 22-71.)

The multitude took some trouble to find Christ, but he considered the motive actuating their search an unworthy

one. The first salutations over, he therefore exposed their selfishness in flocking after him merely because they concluded that one who had worked so astonishing a miracle, and had provided them with such abundant food, would be likely to endow his followers with worldly advantages. He told them to labour for something better than the gratification of their bodily appetites. He, the Son of man, could give them food which should endure unto eternal life. God the Father had given testimony to the Son's ability to do this by the miraculous powers conferred on him. He told them plainly, in answer to a question, that the work of God, the thing that He would be pleased by their performing, was that they should believe in him whom God had sent. The people having replied that although he had fed them miraculously, that fact did not authorise his extraordinary pretensions, for Moses had given Israel bread from heaven to eat, Christ gave them to understand that Moses did not provide the manna. Even that food itself could not in the true sense be called bread from heaven. He declared that the true bread from heaven was that which came down from thence to give life to the world. And when they begged him to provide them with a constant supply of that bread, he declared plainly that he* himself was the bread of life. He was appointed by God to receive all the subjects of his kingdom, the great body of believers given to him, out of all generations of mankind from every part of the world; and he would in nowise cast out any that came to him. It was the divine purpose of an almighty will that every one who by faith discerned and accepted his true character should have eternal life, and be raised up by him at the last day. Then the Jews, failing in this discernment, and taking Christ to be the son of Joseph, murmured at his calling himself the bread from heaven.

* The $\epsilon\gamma\omega$ is here used in the Greek.

But he told them that whatever they might think about the matter, it was really in accordance with the divine will that men should come to him. It was actually by the Father's drawing that they did; and they who thus came should be raised up at the last day. He was superior to Moses, even though the manna eaten in the wilderness had been that prophet's gift. For all who ate of that bread were dead most certainly. But Christ asserted that he was himself the life-giving bread. That bread was his flesh, given in sacrifice, not especially for the people in Moses' time, nor for the five thousand who had just partaken of the loaves and fishes, not even exclusively for the whole nation of the Jews, but for the life of the world. This declaration staggered his audience, but Christ withdrew nothing, but added the memorable words, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' And when some who had but lately hailed him as a prophet, and wished to make him a king, murmured at this as a hard saying, Christ softened it not, but added another, in allusion to the ascent which he should make to the heaven from which he had come down. In due time his followers would have sufficient proof of his return to his former glory. The mere act of gazing on him with their bodily eyes would not profit them whilst they heeded not his real origin. They should attentively receive his word, for this would prove his true nature. For his words were spirit, and they were life. These sayings proved too much for some of his new adherents, who turned their backs from that time. Then asked he of the twelve, 'Will ye also go away?' And when Peter upon this had in his

memorable words declared his faith in the Son of the living God, Christ received his confession with no disclaimer, but proved his knowledge of what was to come upon him by a foreshadowing of the treachery of Judas.

Here we see the supreme importance which Christ attributed to the work for which he had been set apart by the Father. We see how he exalts himself above the great prophet, lawgiver, and deliverer, of the Pentateuch. The venerated Moses was the mere agent of another, and as such had been the means of preserving bodily life for a time only, whilst Christ declares that he had come of himself to give eternal life. We see how he claims a nature above the natural comprehension of the Jews, and what spiritual import he attaches to his words. We must note also that he claims the power of raising up at the last day those who should believe in him, that he declares his flesh and blood invested with a quickening power, that he foretells his ascension into heaven, and receives without reserve the title of the Son of God, and shows his foreknowledge of what was to be done by a traitorous follower.

SECTION XLIII.—*Christ Vindicates his Disciples in their Neglect of the Formal Washings enjoined by those who held the Traditions of the Elders.*

(Matt. xv. 1-20; Mark vii. 1-23.)

Christ boldly retorted the accusation of the Pharisees. ‘You,’ he said, ‘who are so wroth with my poor followers for not observing the unauthorised ordinances of men, you yourselves are transgressing the commandments of God!’ And he proceeded to prove his statement by instances of the way in which they entirely set aside God’s law when

it interfered with their own covetousness. He scrupled not to expose their hypocrisy; and calling the people round him, impressed on them the ill-understood truth that the things which defiled a man were those that came from him, not those that entered his mouth and passed down his throat. He added, 'If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.' And when the disciples, unable to comprehend his words, and afraid of the enmity of the Pharisees, asked him privately to declare his meaning, he assured them that the system of the Pharisees could not last. It was not of the Father's planting, and should be rooted up. They were blind guides, and would be first to fall into the ditch towards which they were leading their ignorant adherents. But his disciples should have known by this time that the things which came from an evil heart really defiled a man, and not the things by man's tradition called unclean, which might enter his lips from without, and be taken into his body; for such matters would pass therefrom in the natural way.

Here we see how Christ denounced the Pharisees in no underhand manner, but boldly to their faces. We see also how he allowed no human ordinances, no conventional regulations to press on his disciples' consciences, and how he swept away the traditions of men which were not in strict accordance with the commandments of God.

SECTION XLIV.—*The Syrophenician Woman whose Daughter was vexed with a Devil.*

(Matt. xv. 21-28; Mark vii. 24-30.)

Christ's two first utterances to this woman of Canaan were harsh beyond expectation. He scrupled not, on her cry for mercy and help, to make the repulsive announcement that he was not sent to perform his mighty acts

for the benefit of people of her nation. And then, when the poor distressed mother actually fell at his feet and worshipped him, saying, 'Lord help me!' she received a still more crushing rebuff. 'It is not proper,' he said, 'to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs.' But when the wretched woman, not even so to be repulsed, said that, dog though she might be, she might yet eat of the children's crumbs that fell from the master's table, then came the welcome gracious words at last, 'O woman, great is thy faith! For this saying be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. The devil is gone out of thy daughter.'

Here we find several very remarkable things. In the first place, we should note that Christ's words in this section were spoken from a place beyond the limits of the Holy Land. His visit to a heathen country* is quite unexplained by the Evangelists. I cannot think it was merely to get out of the way of the scribes and Pharisees who had travelled from Jerusalem to Galilee to question him about the practice of his disciples. Other parts of his history, and the directions he had given to his apostles, to avail in case of persecution, seem against the supposition. It may be that Christ would thus show his own personal independence. Nothing should prevent his doing the will of Him who sent him; but, this provided for, he would be free to do as he pleased. He evidently did not cross the limits of the land for the purpose of working. Is it possible that even he needed some complete relaxation and change? But, if so, rest and retirement were as usual denied him, for he could not be

* Commentators generally suppose that he went only to the parts *towards* Tyre and Sidon, or to a debateable strip of land between the territories; but it seems to me that the words *εἰς τὰ μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος*, *εἰς τὰ μεθόρια Τύρου*, and afterwards, *ἔξελθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου*, can imply no less than that he actually went into the country where Tyre and Sidon were.

hid. His first answers to the poor Gentile woman afford an instance of what we have more than once had occasion to observe, a disregard shown by Christ to the personal feelings of those around him when attention to them would in the least degree interfere with the main object of his coming. And yet before this short narrative concludes, we find Christ breaking through the rule by which he had just said his ministrations were guided. Now what was it that acted so powerfully as to induce him so to relax? Was his nature so weak that excited feeling overbalanced a sense of responsible duty? Did he yield, as we yield sometimes to the begging of a vagrant, in order to escape disagreeable importunity? No; Christ was too strong to be thus turned. It is true he did concede all that was asked, but not merely because it was asked, and not because the disciples wanted to get rid of an annoyance. We know from his own mouth what it was that availed. He had very lately explained how the things which came forth from a person could defile. He now showed how that which came out of one's mouth could also justify. '*For this saying go thy way,*' were his words. What was it, then, that had so operated upon, had so endowed this woman as to give her power even under the blows of disappointment and humiliation, to bring to her lips the words that prevailed? It was doubtless the extraordinary strength and fulness of her faith in Christ. It was her unqualified belief in the efficacy of his personal will. It was her appreciation of the exuberance that distinguished his acts of bounty. '*Truth, Lord,*' she said. '*Deprive not the children of their fill for the sake of a dog.* But, remember; the mere fragments left, after five thousand men, besides women and children, had been fed by thee, filled twelve baskets. The wholesome plentiful food set by thee on the children's table gives life and health and enjoyment to them. But they have more

than enough. A crumb that would never be missed from their supply—a single fragment of that bread which thou hast to give—would suffice to impart new life and perfect health to my tormented daughter.’ Thus she pleaded, and thus she showed that great faith which prevailed with Christ and moved him to do unto her even as she would. And this faith was not a general belief in the God of Israel; but an unlimited reliance, a perfect confidence, in the person at whose feet she fell.

But Christ is seen in more than one aspect here, for finally it must be remarked that in this section his words show him, not only as an envoy bent on strictly discharging his trust, but as a sovereign above all control, doing according to his own unrestrained will among the inhabitants of the earth.

SECTION XLV.—*The Cure of the Deaf Man who had an Impediment in his Speech.*

(Mark vii. 31–37.)

We have the account of this miracle in no gospel except that of Mark; and if Christ uttered more words than one in its performance, only one is recorded, ‘*Ephphatha*’—Syro-Chaldaic* answering to the Hebrew verb ‘*pahthagh*,’† ‘to open.’ Perhaps the writer of the gospel intended us to observe that Christ’s word, ‘Be opened,’ was spoken in the language most familiar to the poor deaf man; for the patient had already some knowledge of language, however little, being able to speak with difficulty (*μογιλάλον*). An instance of Christ’s consideration this, answering to that in the miracle of restoring life to

* Alford, *in loco*.

† The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance, vol. ii. p 1052. (Walton & Maberly, 1860.)

Jairus' daughter, where Christ took the thoughtful care that the young child's reviving faculties should not be confounded with an unfamiliar word. And we find the *Talitha cumi* as well as the *Ephphatha* in Mark's gospel only. It is possible, however, that the use of the latter word, answering to one in Isaiah xxxv. 5, might have been intended as an intimation that the time had now come of which the prophet foretold, when the ears of the deaf should be *unstopped*, the lame leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, and waters should break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

We see here again Christ's reliance on his own power in confidently uttering the words, 'Be opened;' though for some cause he had used unwonted means, and had sighed. Difficulties not to be appreciated by us must have existed; for more than usual astonishment was caused by this work, which restored the sense of hearing to a man who had lost it, and gave him the power to speak plainly instead of with difficulty. All miracles may be in fact equally marvellous; but to our capacities there seems to be a difference in degree; and that here referred to can scarcely strike us in the way it did those close by, as one of the most astounding.

SECTION XLVI.—*The Feeding of the Four Thousand.*

(Matt. xv. 30-39; Mark viii. 1-9.)

There being again great multitudes about Christ, many of whom had been far from their homes for three days, he expressed his compassion, and declared that he would not send them off fasting, lest they should faint by the way. Not noticing the difficulties raised by the disciples, he asked them how many loaves they had? On hearing that their store consisted of but seven, and a few

little fishes, he fed therefrom four thousand men, besides women and children. And of the broken food that was left, seven baskets full were taken up.

As observations have been made on a similar miracle, it may suffice here to recall attention to the compassion felt by Christ, the kind way in which he proved his thoughtfulness, and the confidence he had in his own power.

SECTION XLVII.—*Answer when a Second Demand for a Sign was made; and a Caution to the Disciples against the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

(Matt. xvi. 1-12; Mark viii. 11-21.)

Demurring as to the proofs of a divine mission presented by Christ's wonderful words and works, the Pharisees and Sadducees came and again tried his patience, declaring that they would not be satisfied unless he succeeded in showing them a sign from heaven. Christ's answer seems to imply that it is mere hypocrisy in men to say that all they want is a little more proof. Signs of the times there were, sufficiently obvious to a good and honest heart; and men wilfully blind to them had no right to make their own conditions of belief. They were educated men who were now tempting him. They were, therefore, well acquainted with the prophecies, and might see if these were not being fulfilled in him. His words were not spoken in secret, nor were his works done in a corner. They might judge for themselves if all things he did and said were not manifestly opposed to all evil, physical, moral, mental, spiritual; and if his claim was not adequately supported. Sighing deeply at the thought of the wickedness of that generation, he denied them the sign from heaven above, thus improperly asked; but intimated that before long they should have one from the depths

below—the sign of the prophet Jonah. After leaving them, the hollow-heartedness and malignity of the upper classes amongst the Jews so strongly impressed his mind, that he could speak of nothing else when in the ship with his friends. It was natural to think that they would feel as he did; yet they seem to have possessed no more sympathy with the emotions of their master on this than on other occasions of their companionship with him. No wonder, then, they entirely misunderstood his allusion when he bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and of the leaven of Herod. And he was forced to upbraid them for the smallness of their faith, which made them think that he spoke because they had forgotten to take bread, and was warning them against danger to themselves in eating anything made with leaven of the Pharisees, &c.—danger, I suppose, either of ceremonial defilement, or of bodily injury from some unwholesome substance which their enemies might have concealed in the bread. His two wonderful miracles lately performed should have taught them that he could, if really necessary, supply them with any quantity of wholesome food. It was the mischievous teaching of the scribes and Pharisees—infection from the hypocrisy of those sects and the Herodians—that he wished to guard them against.

We see here in Christ's sigh the genuine grief he felt at the perversity of the higher classes of his countrymen. We must note also the penetration which prevented a sacrifice of his dignity in acceding to a request which there is no reason to think they really wished to see granted. We may further note his wisdom and foreknowledge in the mysterious intimation made about the sign of Jonah, referring either to the certainty of the destruction of their city if his hearers repented not as the Ninevites did, or foretelling his own return 'out of the

belly of hell,'* like Jonah's, after 'the earth with her bars had been about him,'† three days. And, combining a view of the latter with the former part of this section, we see the bold and straightforward way in which Christ dealt both with friends and foes, and how he again inculcated the necessity of unqualified faith in himself.

SECTION XLVIII.—*The Restoration of Sight to a Blind Man, near Bethsaida.*

(Mark viii. 22-26.)

This is another action recorded only in the second gospel. The only words we read as actually uttered by Christ at the time are those which he spoke when it was completed: 'Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.'

We do not know why this injunction was given; and I refrain from making remarks on what is not understood. But we may observe how Christ claimed the obedience of the man whom he had benefited.

SECTION XLIX.—*Christ's Question to his Disciples concerning himself; and his Words following Peter's Confession.*

(Matt. xvi. 13-20; Mark viii. 27-30; Luke ix. 18-21.)

It would seem that a certain period arrived in the course of Christ's ministry when he found it expedient to hold more intimate communion with the twelve than had previously distinguished the intercourse between the master and his disciples—the Lord and his servants. That confidence was to be established which would make them his friends. There can be little doubt, then, that when he asked them what men said of him, there was an intention to bring out the confession that followed. But, at the same time, as Christ, being a real man, used

* Jonah ii. 2.

† v. 6.

his eyes to see, and his feet to walk, and his hands to handle withal, exactly as any other human being, and never employed miraculous powers (as far as we can know) when natural agency would suffice for his purpose, I see no reason to doubt that he availed himself, as another man might, of the information gathered by his companions in their intercourse with those around them in the ordinary transactions of daily life. Their answers were full of interest, but as our present object is not to examine them, we pass to Christ's second question: 'But whom say ye* that I am?' And when Peter had made his noble confession, Christ answered and said, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' This address to the chief of the apostles meant, I believe, this: 'Thou wast born Simon, the son of Jona. But blessed art thou, because my Father hath given thee a nature above that received from thine earthly parents. Thy name given by myself, at thy new birth, which made thee a new man capable of perceiving heavenly things, is Peter. This confession shows thee worthy of that name. On thee, therefore, as on a rock, I will commence the building of my church. And against it, never shall the dread powers of the unseen world, never shall the descent of my foremost champions for a time to the grave, prevail. Of my apostles, thou first hast hailed me in my true character; and thou first shalt proclaim my name after the descent of the Holy Ghost, and shalt give the house of Israel to

* Ὑμεῖς.

know assuredly that God hath made Jesus both Lord and Christ. Then shall the Christian temple begin to rise : for thousands shall repent and be baptised at thy word, and shall so be added as lively stones built into the church on the first-laid stone—thyself—the first confessor of my name, the earliest herald of my kingdom. Thou shalt, indeed, open that kingdom. For thy words, and thy writings, inspired by the Holy Ghost, shall be as keys to bind and to loose. The consolations and rebukes, the invitations and threatenings, put forth by thee on earth shall be ratified in heaven.’

Here we see the importance with which Christ invested his own character, and which he claimed for his work ; as being things that only the Father could reveal to a man, because it was beyond the power of mere flesh and blood to comprehend them. And though there may be differences of opinion as to what he meant by *the rock* he spoke of, there can be no question that Christ declared that he himself would build thereon a church, against which the gates of Hades should never prevail, and that Christ claimed the keys of the kingdom of heaven as his own, with right to commit them to whomsoever he would. We see also his foreknowledge of events.

SECTION L.—*Christ Foretells his approaching Sufferings, Rebukes Peter, and Exhorts the People.*

(Matt. xvi. 21-28; Mark viii. 31-38; Luke ix. 22-27.)

Almost immediately after Peter had been called the rock on which the church was to be securely built, Christ said to the same apostle, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’ We cannot understand this terrible rebuke without looking back to see what could have possibly evoked it. Doing this, we find it to be in exactly the same language as that

which came to Christ's lips in the desert, when an easy conquest of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them had been offered to him. On that repulse the tempter departed from him for a season. Now—at a certain important stage of Christ's career—the precise temptation comes again; but this time it is suggested not when Christ was alone with the power of darkness, but surrounded by loving friends. It comes from the mouth of the affectionate Peter. 'What!' exclaimed the apostle, excited by a sense of his newly-conferred powers, 'can we suffer things to come to such a pass as that? Shall my master suffer, be rejected and killed, and buried, before his kingdom is established? Never! This shall not be to thee, Lord. We will manage far better than that. We are going up to Jerusalem to help thee to assume thy kingly power. The people are ready to rise in thy favour, and a little exercise of the wisdom and command over nature which thou hast so often shown will lift thee to the throne of Solomon, and then bring all nations to thy feet. Yes! Spare thyself, Lord. Think no more of sufferings and death. Be persuaded by us. Avoid the humiliations that will be painful to us as well as to thyself, and follow the path that all the great ones of this earth have taken in their way to power and renown.' But this advice, apparently so kind, and really so calculated to be acceptable to human feelings, aroused Christ's impassioned indignation. As though he feared not to be proof against it if he listened another moment, he turned sharply upon Peter, and, taking care that the other disciples heard, delivered the tremendous rebuke, 'Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offence unto me, a stone of stumbling. Thou puttest worldly considerations before me—notions of personal ease and dignity—instead of the things of God, the great objects for which I came.' And then he took the opportunity of telling not only his disciples, but the people

near, whom he called to hear him, that as he was come to suffer in this world before the end could be attained for which he entered it, so those who would follow him now must be ready to give up their worldly prospects—to deny themselves—to take up their cross daily—to go through humiliation and death as he himself would. The great object of their lives, the attainment of the reward set before them, was worth any sacrifice of self. The man who, in pursuit of it, was ready to offer up his whole existence, or, in the words of the gospel, to ‘lose his life,’ should really ‘save it’—should gain happiness and peace of mind* most certainly; whilst the selfish man, he who was determined to make himself comfortable here—to lay out his plans for his own enjoyment with no reference to the advantage of others and the claims of God, should find himself disappointed most certainly—should miss his object—should discover† that his life had been utterly wasted—lost. Indeed, every one knew that his life might be taken away in a moment; and then, even if he had gained the whole world what would it profit him? The wealth, the position, the comforts, that he had taken such pains to secure could not avail him in the least degree as a ransom for his life. Nothing that a man could give could regain that, or even a single moment’s enjoyment of the ease or the honours or treasures he had laboured to appropriate for himself. If not before death, yet then at least, he would find that he had made a wrong calculation. And further—whosoever was ashamed of this doctrine of self-sacrifice—whosoever was ashamed of a Messiah ready to endure humiliation and suffering, and to lay down his life for his friends, of him should the Son of man be ashamed when he should come in his own glory and in the glory of his Father with the holy angels; for come he cer-

* Generally here, and always hereafter.

† Either here or hereafter.

tainly would ; and his faithful followers should not be left without reward. And he spoke not as one whose glory and power were uncertain. He would tell them of a truth that some of those standing near him at that moment should not taste of death till they saw his kingdom establishing itself on the earth.

We see here the determined character of Christ, evinced by the horror he felt at whatever was calculated to turn him from the purpose for which he was sent. His object, he knew, was to be secured by self-sacrifice, and not ease—humiliation, and not human applause. And we see again, that as he cared not for his own comfort, so neither did he consult the feelings of others when their apparent consideration for him might tend to check his steadfast ardour. Peter just before had been thought worthy of the most distinguished honours. He must have at once considered himself of prime necessity in his master's council, and fit to give advice under any emergency. How Christ's ruthless invective must have shocked his sensibilities and made him feel for the moment degraded before his brethren ! We see also the genuine candour with which Christ warned the people of what his followers would have to undergo before the rewards of his kingdom could be obtained. He was determined publicly* to pledge himself and his disciples to self-denial. And, lastly, we see the dignity to which he lays claim, and the unwavering certainty he felt that in due time he should come in his own glory and in the glory of the Father with the holy angels ; and that he should be the bestower of rewards that would show all sacrifices made and trials endured for his sake to have been comparatively trivial.

* Mark viii. 34, ' When he had called *the people.*'

SECTION LI.—*The Transfiguration and the subsequent Discourse.*

(Matt. xvii. 1-13 ; Mark ix. 2-13 ; Luke ix. 28-36.)

Whilst the echoes of the divine voice acknowledging him as the beloved of the Father and declaring him to be the Son of God could yet be caught from the bright overshadowing cloud, Christ, still resplendent with celestial glory, thought of his three bewildered friends, and touching them as they lay helpless on the ground, said, ‘Rise, and be not afraid.’ Afterwards, when returning as it were from heaven to earth, coming down from personal intercourse with God and the great lawgiver and the great prophet of Israel, he condescended to listen to the questions which the appearance of Elijah had suggested to the three disciples. ‘True,’ said Christ, ‘it certainly had been foretold by the prophets that before my kingdom could be established Elias should first come and restore all things. This very day you have yourselves seen that Elias has been on the mount we are descending ; and so far you may say he has now come. But you must not suppose this short visit of his, unknown to all but yourselves, to be the primary fulfilment of the Scripture. For before we ascended the mount—before even my own ministry began—the Elias of prophecy came to prepare the hearts and minds of the people for the Messiah. And though his spirit and power were marvellous, for all Jerusalem and Judea and the region round about Jordan went out to him confessing their sins, and all men mused in their hearts on account of him, yet at last he was treated just as badly as the prophets before him had been, and as the Son of man himself shall yet be. For the Scriptures which speak of my great predecessor foreshow also my own sufferings and death.’

Here we have a striking instance of the absence of all consideration of self about Christ. He who would assert the loftiest claims when the purposes of his coming might be thereby furthered, found no delight in overpowering his friends with the glory that had suddenly come upon him. His thoughts the next moment were for their comfort and reassurance. And after the bright cloud had ceased to encircle them, though probably before the divine lustre had altogether left his face,* he resumed his ordinary work of instructive teaching, and spoke of approaching humiliation, agony and death; and ordered that the splendours which might dazzle the imagination of the multitude should not be told of till after his work should be done.

SECTION LII.—*The Expulsion of an Evil Spirit which the Disciples could not drive out.*

(Matt. xvii. 14-21; Mark ix. 14-29; Luke ix. 37-42.)

After the descent from the holy mount, Christ seeing a large concourse of people, and finding the disciples hard pressed by questionings of the scribes, interfered immediately on behalf of his friends, and peremptorily demanded, 'What question ye with them?' thus showing the crowd that the cause of his followers was his own. Afterwards, when the case had been explained, and the father of the poor youth who was possessed with a dumb spirit had entreated his help, Christ said, addressing probably the cavilling scribes and the undecided multitudes, perhaps also even his baffled disciples, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring the child hither to me.' On personally

* Else why were the people at the foot of the mount *greatly amazed* when they saw him? And why did they *run and salute him*? Mark ix. 15.

witnessing the convulsions of the wretched object, he made further enquiries; and when another urgent appeal for help had been made, qualified by the poor ignorant parent's words, 'If thou canst do any thing,' Christ said, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' The man here rightly seized the fact that he had now one to deal with very different from the twelve. He doubted no longer about Christ's saving power. He mistrusted only the quality of his own faith. So he cried out with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief!' This was enough for Christ, who then rebuked the unclean spirit in the child, saying, 'Dumb and deaf spirit, come out of him, and enter no more into him!' Christ afterwards explained to his disciples in private, that the energising quality of genuine faith was indispensable in those who would work a miracle. There might be degrees of faith as there were differences in the size of various seeds, some being large, others very small. Yet in the most minute of them there was the principle of reproductive vitality. So, if they had faith, however small, as a little grain of mustard seed had within it a germ of life, nothing would be impossible to them. Howbeit, all this must be qualified with the consideration that there were classes of miracles that under no circumstances could be performed without previous fasting and prayer.

We see here the effectual earnestness with which Christ took up the cause of his baffled disciples. We must observe, too, how, with all his readiness to give relief, he on certain occasions required implicit faith in himself, on the part of those who sought his aid. 'It is not as you put it,' he said to the anxious but doubting father, 'it is not *if I can do it*, but *if thou canst believe* in my personal ability.' And he told the disciples, that, in most cases, faith was a necessary condition in those who would receive

he benefit, but always in those who would perform a miraculous act—faith, not in their own powers (for this self-confidence, perhaps, was the cause of their failure, and constituted their unbelief), but faith in him whose name they worked in.

SECTION LIIII.—*Renewed Intimation given to the Disciples by Christ of his approaching Sufferings.*

(Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Mark ix. 30-32; Luke ix. 43-45.)

In repeating the announcement of the things that were to be done to him, Christ expressly stated that he should be killed and should rise the third day; and found it necessary to add, ‘Let these sayings sink down into your ears.’ Notwithstanding all this, the disciples perceived not—this saying was hid from them.

Taking up the New Testament in a desultory way, and coming upon this passage, we might well fancy that Christ was here telling his disciples for the first time of the sufferings and humiliations that he would have to endure; and this idea would be strengthened by the way in which they received the announcement. But it was not so. What we have before us is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so it cannot be an accidental repetition, as might be supposed if we found it in one gospel only. And those three gospels all contain the previous warning given after Peter’s confession; and two of them a similar reference to sufferings and death, after the transfiguration. All this tends to show us the class of minds that Christ had to deal with, and how slow the hearts of the disciples were to believe. We also see Christ’s determination, particularly after encouragements and success, to set himself resolutely in the path of self-sacrifice, to keep steadily before his view the great object of his coming, and the narrow thorny way to the end from which he was determined no temptation

should divert him. And, disagreeable as these things were to his followers, he judged it right that their minds as well as his own, should be impressed with them. He foresaw the advantage the retrospect of this would be to them at a future time.

SECTION LIV.—*The Miracle of the Tribute Money.*

(Matt. xvii. 24-27.)

Peter had incautiously committed himself by saying that his master would pay the temple-tribute money. So Christ, on meeting his hasty disciple soon after, made him see his error by asking him, ‘Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own sons or of those not related to them?’ Peter, of course, replied, ‘Of the latter.’ Christ said, ‘Then sons of kings are free. Therefore how can I, the firstborn of the great King in whose name the tribute is asked, be called on to pay it? The thing is incongruous. However, you have committed yourself; so the credit of your good word shall be maintained, though it is not fitting that the money should come as a direct contribution from me. Go, therefore, to the sea with your line, and take up the first fish that comes to your hook, and in his mouth shall be found the *stater* that will exactly pay for two persons. And that you may give to the collectors as the amount they will expect from me and yourself.’

We see here Christ’s knowledge of Peter’s words in his absence. We see also his claim to be the Son of God in a sense that could apply to none else of the house of Israel. And we see the perfect confidence he had in his own power over nature and events. We may note also a fresh instance of his kind considerateness in extricating Peter from the difficulty in which he had thoughtlessly involved himself.

SECTION LV.—*Christ Reproves his Disciples for their Disputes and Love of Pre-eminence.*

(Matt. xviii. 1-20; Mark ix. 33-50; Luke ix. 46-48.)

Disputes for precedence and pre-eminence among men who had been told by their trusted leader that they were to be persecuted and ill-used for the rest of their lives! Such things look strange indeed to us, but the disciples seem completely and determinedly to have ignored all that Christ had told them about his own humiliation and shameful death, and all the warnings he had given of what should be done to themselves. Come what might, they must have thought, they should be the chief officers of a glorious household, and administrators in a great earthly kingdom; so each one among them was eager to assert his individual claim for some high dignity in that visionary court. Christ resolutely disabused their minds. He hesitated not to dispel these agreeable and somewhat selfish anticipations. And he taught them that the way for a man to be truly great was to do the utmost possible amount of good to others. Unless they abandoned their rivalries and became as innocent in the point of worldly ambition as little children, he would tell them that not only they must fail to be great in his kingdom, they could not even enter it at all. The strong amongst them must not be flattered by the others; the weak must not be treated injuriously. A man had better have a millstone put about his neck and be cast into the sea than scandalise one of Christ's little ones, or cause him to stumble. For in the least of such Christ himself was represented. Woe then to the man by whom such offence should come! If he could not control his hand or foot or eye let him cut off or pluck out the offending member! For a man would rather submit to such a loss to save his life than be sen-

tenced to have his whole body ignominiously cast out into the horrid place where worms perpetually gnawing and fires kept burning day and night, consumed the dishonoured carcasses of the most abhorred malefactors.*

And so whilst they were wrangling about honours and dignities in the kingdom of God, their offences might not only exclude them altogether from it, but expose them to a judgment as dreadful as that just mentioned. Painful it might be to part with what might seem as dear or as necessary as a right hand or an eye, but Christ's followers must submit to fiery trials which should season them for their work and office; which should, as it were, salt them with fire, as every Jewish sacrifice was salted with salt. But these trials, sent to fit them for God's kingdom and glory, might by perversity be abused and deprived of all good efficacy, as even salt might lose its saltness and become good for nothing. And Christ's disciples should see to it that their disputes and arrogance did not deprive the salt that was in them of its savour. Let them look at little children (one of whom Christ had just taken into his arms). He could tell them that in heaven their angels did always behold the face of his Father. Was not the difference infinitely greater between God and a little child, than between a disciple, however advanced, and the weakest and most inconsiderable of Christ's followers, nay, even the one who might have strayed furthest out of the way? They might well regard such a one with tenderness and forbearance, for Christ himself was come to save that which was lost. A poor stray sheep was not neglected by the owner even of a large flock. He would seek it out and rejoice

* See Isa. lxvi. 24. I wish to state no opinion here on the awful subject of future punishments. But whether other parts of Scripture do or do not speak of never-ending torments for human beings, I am convinced that the present passage does not. I am ready to give the grounds for my conclusion, but this is not the place for stating them.

over it when found more than over all the rest. Even when trespasses had undoubtedly been committed, great caution and tenderness must be observed in dealing with the culprit, who ought to have every opportunity given for acknowledgment of his fault and for amendment of life. Having now said much to correct the unworthy ideas of his disciples as to precedence, and to abate their feelings of rivalry, Christ concluded with assuring them that they should have dignities conferred on them which they would fully appreciate even on earth. Thus, whatsoever they should bind on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven. They should have their rewards also. The time would come in which whenever any two of them should agree on earth as touching anything that they should ask, it should be done for them. For wheresoever two or three should be gathered together in Christ's name, there would he be in the midst of them.

We see here, again, how Christ caught, as it were, at every opportunity of correcting the ideas of his disciples about his kingdom. We see also with what wisdom, while he asserted his own condescension, he taught forbearance and kindness, and consideration for the welfare of others. We see also the plain-spokenness with which he warned those who caused offences, of the punishments that awaited them; and the candour with which he gave notice of the fiery trials that would be sent, though not in anger, to those who were to be fitted for his kingdom. We must note also how he claimed to be acquainted with what was done in heaven—the authority he assumed—and the importance he again attached to his work. Lastly, we have to wonder at the engagement he made—certainly as astonishing a one as ever was entered into by any in the form of man—to be

present in all the assemblies of disciples in his name ; and the implied efficacy of his promised presence in their midst.

SECTION LVI.—*Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.*

(Matt. xviii. 21–35.)

Peter, incapable at that time of apprehending a grand principle, desired precise directions about the limits of forgiveness on occasions of repeated injuries received from his brother ; and Christ replied that there should be no limits whatever. For every man here on earth was in respect of God in the position, figuratively, of a servant who owed his master ten thousand talents, or, in other words, a sum (equivalent to about ten millions of English money) which it would be impossible that any man should pay. But in respect of one's brother, the greatest injury that could be received would, in comparison with what a man owed God, be adequately represented by a hundred *denarii* (a petty amount of three or four pounds sterling). God, on our duly presented supplications, freely remits our incalculable amount of debt. But men seize their brother debtors by the throat ; and notwithstanding all entreaties, and forgetting the forgiveness they have received from God, are ready to ruin them and theirs if they cannot instantly pay the unimportant amount due. But conduct like this will expose the unmerciful to the severest judgments of God, who will make us bear again the burden of our debt if we from our hearts forgive not every one our brother his trespasses.

In the striking parable which (as I read it) imparts the teaching condensed above, we have a fresh instance of the ready and marvellous powers of illustration possessed by Christ. We see also in the concluding declaration the

knowledge that he claimed of the mind of God, who had determined that the unforgiving should not be forgiven.

SECTION LVII.—*Christ Reproves John for an Unjustifiable Interference.*

(Mark ix. 38-41 ; Luke ix. 49, 50.)

Christ showed that a work such as that which he was come to set on foot must not be stopped in any quarter because all who honestly endeavoured to aid in its performance did not receive divine teaching in the company of his immediate followers, or worship exactly after their way. A real service done by the man whom John had rebuked, showed at least that he was no enemy ; and his success would encourage him to persevere, and lead to a desire for fuller communications of Christ's power and truth. One who could effectively set about a miracle in Christ's name, would not lightly speak evil of him. For this reason he that was not against Christ was for him. The man's intentions were good, and worthy of being recognised ; for even the smallest action performed for Christ's sake—the giving of a cup of water in his name to a disciple—should not lose its reward.

We see here the large spirit of toleration shown by Christ, and inculcated by him on his followers. We see his readiness to receive every service, however small, rendered to his cause. We should note also the considerateness with which he tempered his rebuke to John, by declaring that any act of kindness performed to the disciples as disciples would be taken as a service rendered personally to himself.

SECTION LVIII.—*The Seventy Disciples sent forth with a Charge.*

(Luke x. 1–16.)

This charge to the seventy as recorded in Luke is not so ample as that which was delivered to the twelve, according to Matthew. It is needless here to repeat the observations made in Sect. XXXIX.

We need only notice here the care which Christ took to let all those whom he employed on his service know that their position was a most important and honourable one. Besides the twelve, he saw fit to despatch on an apostolic journey the seventy, for the purpose of heralding his name in every city and place whither he himself would come. If the seventy could not pretend to the dignity of the twelve, they were nevertheless assured that whoso heard them heard Christ; that he who despised them despised Christ; and that he who despised Christ despised him that sent him.

SECTION LIX.—*Christ's Answer to the Question of his Brethren about going up to Jerusalem.*

(John vii. 1–10.)

The brethren of Christ were incapable at this time of regarding things from the same point of view as he did—they had not attained to the degree of faith possessed by his apostles—they could not as yet share his feelings. Christ spoke plainly to them about their yielding to the spirit of the world, but found it not good to speak plainly of his purposes. It would have done more harm than good to entrust them with a knowledge of his plans. Whatever course he might adopt, a regard like that which they cherished for worldly resources would never influence him. No taunts of theirs

should move him to a vainglorious display of his powers. When his time was come, he would do what was right without regarding either worldly inducements or hints from his relations.

We see here Christ's wisdom and discretion. He did not wish his coming to Jerusalem to be given out beforehand by men without faith; who, however they might admire his wonderful works, had at the time no appreciation of his real objects, and quite misapprehended his character. We see also the perfect independence of action which he claimed for himself, and the boldness with which he spoke to his brethren of their state of mind.

SECTION LX.—*Christ at the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem.*

(John vii. 14-53.)

Christ, who saw that it would not be fitting to go up in the uncongenial company of his relatives, departed in due time from Galilee to attend the feast without the display which they had counselled. And when the proper occasion was come, he taught in the temple. The Jews expressed their surprise at the knowledge of Scripture, and power of applying it, which were so manifest in his words. They were certain he had not been brought up in any of the schools of the rabbis, yet he knew as much of their sacred books as the best of the scribes, and taught with infinitely greater authority. Christ intimated that his teaching derived its force from something more than what human nature could acquire by application to study, or than any master in Israel could communicate. The teaching he gave was not his own, as that of a mere man, but was the teaching of God, who had sent him. And if any one was determined resolutely to do God's will, he should

understand whether this teaching were of God or not. If they had been influenced by an honest resolve to serve God, they would have kept the law delivered by Moses, and not have sought to violate it by going about to kill an innocent person. Then, in reference to the miracle on the Sabbath day, which had made them wonder, Christ called their attention to the fact that the law itself could not be observed without the doing of some kind of work on the Sabbath day. For instance, they very rightly performed the rite of circumcision on the correct day, the eighth after birth, whether it fell on the Sabbath or not. And should they be angry with him because he had—not indeed wounded, but—healed on the Sabbath day? They ought to look more deeply into things before passing judgment on a man for a good action. In answer to certain objections to him, made by some of the men of Jerusalem, Christ said that, though they had heard a little of his early days, and knew the place where he had been brought up, they were not to think of him as one who had left his original condition in life with personal, selfish, or ambitious objects. However well they might know him according to the flesh, their conduct proved that they had no knowledge of that True One who had sent him. He proceeded to declare that, notwithstanding the efforts of the Pharisees and chief priests to remove him out of their way, he would yet remain some little time longer among them. He would not leave the world till he saw fit, and then he would return to Him who had sent him, and be entirely out of their reach. Afterwards, at the last day of the feast, and with reference, as many think, to the water of the Pool of Siloam, which it was the custom for the priests in the temple to pour out at certain times during this feast, thereby suggesting certain spiritual considerations to the people,* Christ stood and cried, ‘If

* Isa. xii. 3. ‘With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.’

any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ;'* and he promised that what the Scriptures declared of the running water from the temple should be fulfilled in the case of those who believed in him. They should receive an overflowing supply of the Holy Spirit, whose life-giving influences might extend through their means to those around them.

We see from part of this section how readily Christ could repulse the assaults of the Jews by arguments derived from their own practices ; his stores of wisdom and knowledge were instantly available in every emergency. And in the latter part of the passage, we must notice how his words convey the assertion of superhuman dignity and power, inherent in himself ; so much so that the efficacy of that which streamed from him to vivify his own people should not be confined to them, but should flow through them for the refreshment of others also. Some officers sent to take him, found their power altogether neutralised by his words, and were forced to confess to the chief priests and Pharisees, 'Never man spake like this man.'

SECTION LXI.—*A Woman taken in Adultery brought before Christ.*

(John viii. 1-11.)

A trap was now laid for Christ by the poor woman's accusers, who, in demanding of him, 'What sayest thou?' said in effect, 'Thou hast declared as one having authority

* Most commentators think that Christ said this at a moment when the water was being poured out. On the contrary, others consider that as the water was poured out on seven days of the feast, but *not* on the last day, Christ took occasion *then* to refer to himself as the never-failing supply. The water which the priests had poured out had now ceased to flow, but any who were athirst might always come to him to drink. Vide Alford, *in loco*, and Smith's Dict., 'Feast of Tabernacles.'

that a look of desire with impure intent is, in the sight of God, the same thing as the commission of the act for which the law that you pretend to fulfil assigns the punishment of death. But here is a woman taken in the very act of sin. Now, what sayest thou that we are to do with her?' How likely it seemed to them that Christ would be flattered by their asking for his judgment and be tempted to pronounce a decision which, whether for acquittal or condemnation, they knew must fatally damage his position! For if he declined to take any notice of the case, they would have cried him down as a poor creature after all, who was afraid of acting up to his professions; or as one who encouraged sin by refusing to condemn it in the person of the woman. And if he had given sentence, they would have denounced him to the Romans as assuming kingly power, or to the Sanhedrim as interfering with the constituted authorities. Christ treated them as they deserved—with contemptuous inattention. He stooped down and wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. But failing thus to stay their clamour, he calmly raised himself for an instant, and gave them an answer which they must have remembered for the rest of their lives: 'He that is guiltless of impurity among you, in thought, design, or act, let him first cast a stone at her!' He then resumed his attitude of preoccupation, whilst every one of the accusers, convicted by conscience, quietly departed, and left him with the woman. Finding that they had all gone out, he again raised himself and said to the poor sinner, 'Where are those thine accusers? Hath no one condemned thee?' She answered, 'No one, Lord.' And he said, 'Neither do I condemn thee. For even if I had been sent here to fill the office of judge, which I was not, there is no one to bear witness against thee. Thou canst go, therefore; but remember this terrible danger only just escaped, and sin no more.'

Here we have a most striking instance of the wisdom of Christ. His discretion and skill were tried to the utmost, and not found wanting. A number of hypocritical, petulant accusers were turned into self-convicted, abashed culprits. We see also how Christ protested against sin. He caused it to bring shame on those who, for purposes of their own and not from a regard to God's law, indicted the erring woman. With regard to her, there was nothing that his position authorised him to do in the way of punishment, and he could not keep her in his company. He dismissed her, therefore, but not without a solemn warning which she was never likely to forget.

SECTION LXII.—*Continuation of Discourse; and
Disputations at Jerusalem.*

(John viii. 12-59.)

Christ, who, in the course of his teaching, used so often to gather illustrations from what was at the moment before the eyes or in the minds of those around him, had already at this feast of Tabernacles contrasted the abundant flow of spiritual blessings upon, and through, believers in him, with the narrow stream poured for a few times in the year through a golden vessel in the temple. He now pointed to the golden chandeliers which had been lighted up during the joyous festival. They had given light at certain seasons to people whose numbers were necessarily limited by the dimensions of the temple. 'But I,' said Christ, 'am the light of the world—my brightness is not confined to this narrow spot—it does not shine on a few grand occasions only. Wheresoever and whensoever a man will follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.' After an objection on the part of the Pharisees, that he was only bearing record of himself, and that his unsupported assertions went for nothing,

anybody could say such things, and that what he declared was not true, Christ said that his own record of himself was true. There were certain things which made him a valid witness even for himself. Conscious as he was of a heavenly origin, and performing as he did works which they all had heard of, and might, had they chosen, have seen, his testimony was unlike that of other men. Its value would be evident to all who investigated it. And his Father bore witness of him also; so that they had the testimony of two, which was what their law required. It was their own fault if they could not recognise his Father's testimony. The Pharisees then said contemptuously to him, 'Where is thy Father?' Christ replied, 'You need not have asked; for if you had duly studied my words and examined my works, you would have known me and my Father also.' He added soon afterwards that he was not going to stay with them always; and the time would come when they should seek their Messiah and find none but false Christs, who were not able to deliver, and so they should die in their guilt. For if they continued opposed to the things of heaven from whence he came, if they would not receive him as their Messiah, they should perish in their sins. They said then, 'Who art thou? What sort of Messiah wouldst thou make?' Christ referred them again to the tenour of his teaching from its commencement, and declared that he spoke the words of Him who had sent him. But the Jews would not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. Christ then told them that when they should have lifted up the Son of man, such circumstances of wonder should attend and follow the consummation of their malice that many should be convinced of the truth concerning him; and there should be more abundant evidence than any existing while he was yet with them, so that all might know who did not prefer to remain in ignorance. Many of his hearers in some

certain sense believed when he again declared that he had always the support of the Father and did the things that pleased Him. Christ told them that by continuing in his word and by knowledge of the truth they should become free. But these new adherents, though virtually under the dominion of the Romans, and men, as we should judge by the context, in a state of subjection to sin, would not admit that they had ever been in bondage at all. They pretended to be children of the great Abraham, descendants of the son of Isaac to whom nations were to bow down. But Christ showed how all that did not prevent their being the servants of sin. They had not his word sufficiently within them, they had not thoroughly broken their connection with the wicked Jews, who went about to kill him. They, who claimed to be Israelites of such pure descent, and to have not only Abraham but God for their father, proved by their not comprehending the language of the Son, that they bore no relationship to Him; but were rather children of the devil, whose murderous deeds they imitated, and whose love of falsehood they inherited. Christ then feared not to say, ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin? Can you point to one act of mine inconsistent with perfect holiness and rectitude, or prove one word of mine to be untrue? If you cannot, then why will you not believe me? Show that you are God’s children by hearing God’s words.’ The Jews, unable to answer this, resorted then to abuse, calling Christ a Samaritan, and a person possessed. Christ replied that a life spent in uniformly honouring his Father proved that he was not under the power of any demon; and he went on to declare that whosoever would keep his saying should never see death. The Jews very justly took this as equivalent to a claim of superiority, even over their great father Abraham and the holy prophets. Christ in no way denied this, but said he was only taking the honour that God had given him.

‘And as to your father Abraham,’ he added, ‘of whose dignity and honour you are making yourselves the champions, he rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad.’ The Jews retorted, ‘Who art thou, who hast not yet attained the age usually allotted to men—thou, born in these modern days—to talk thus? How canst thou have seen our ancient father Abraham?’ Then came the climax in the memorable words of Christ, which were plainly thought by the Jews blasphemous for a mere creature to utter, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM.’*

Before noticing the most important statements made by Christ during this discussion, we may observe the great independence and courage on his part which are apparent throughout. Indeed, one can hardly avoid feeling that the latter portion of the controversy was not conducted in the way we should have expected. Some disappointment comes over one at Christ’s manner with those Jews who were disposed to believe in him, or rather, who are stated (with some qualification it must be presumed) to have believed on him after his words in verses 28, 29. But his way with them, instead of attractive, appears to us rough and his speech repulsive. Thus parts of this chapter are positively displeasing to our natural feelings. But disappointment is more than balanced by the reflection that these very things contribute proofs of the veracity of the historian, and of the independence and the distinct qualities marked with so copious a variety, that were combined in the wonderful character of Christ. In this narration evidently nothing is made up to please. Perhaps the main facts were so vividly before the Evangelist’s own remembrance, that whilst writing he heeded not the ignorance of his readers as to some minor points, a record of which might have helped

* ἐγὼ εἰμι

our general comprehension. Be this as it may, we see clearly enough that Christ would not accept from those who offered him adherence, anything short of the most uncompromising submission; and that his lowliness and meekness were not of a nature that prevented his speaking in terms of the most awful severity. And as to his claims, there can be no doubt whatever, that in this chapter Christ is represented as putting them forward in the most obvious way possible. He makes one assertion after another, till he finishes by identifying himself with that Almighty Being who in Horeb declared to Moses His mysterious name, 'I AM.'

SECTION LXIII.—*The Return of the Seventy with Joy.*

(Luke x. 17-24.)

The jubilant account given by the seventy of their successes seems to have struck a sympathetic chord of exultation in Christ, who caught up the strain of joy which they had sounded. In this bright moment he cried, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven! The power of evil, rampant in high places, exalted so as to domineer over this abject world, has had a deadly blow. You shall not be hurt by that power. I have fought against it, and have the mastery over it. Its fall is as certain as your success. You, personally commissioned by me on earth, shall possess miraculous immunities from harm. But of these gifts be not proud, bestowed as they are more for the general benefit of the world than of yourselves. Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.' Christ then, himself rejoicing in spirit, acknowledged the justice and goodness of his Father. To those who were puffed up with an idea of their own superior knowledge and wisdom, the revelations were not vouchsafed which were imparted to persons whom they would arrogantly look

down upon as babes. As on a former occasion (Sect. XXVI.), Christ added that all things were delivered to him by the Father—that no one but the Father knew the Son—that no one knew the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son thought fit to reveal Him. And blessed with this revelation were his disciples; for they saw and heard things which many prophets and kings had desired to hear and see without having been so privileged.

Here we should observe how Christ claims ability to give power over hurtful things. He says not ‘God gives it you,’ but, ‘I give you this power.’ He also, whilst claiming for himself a nature inscrutable, declares that he is able to impart the knowledge of the Father to whomsoever he would. Then he tells the disciples that to see his works and hear his words was a greater privilege than any that had been enjoyed, even by kings and prophets, before his time.

SECTION LXIV.—*Answer to the Tempting Lawyer; and the Parable of the Good Samaritan.*

(Luke x. 25-37.)

Christ himself born as a Jew, and his questioner also, were both at this time under the law; and the latter was a professed teacher of it. It is important to bear this in mind, because it makes the reference given to the law in answer to the first question doubly appropriate: ‘Why should you—a teacher of those statutes and judgments which if a man do he shall live in them*—why should you come to a person unaccredited by any of your great lawyers to seek directions for the way of life? What is written in this matter? Tell me.’ The man was thus forced by Christ to answer his own question, and he

* Lev. xviii. 5.

probably felt at the moment that it would be somewhat ridiculous if the thing were suffered to end there. So in order to make it appear that he had not received a conclusive reply, he went on to propound the celebrated question 'Who is my neighbour?' But this also Christ compelled him, by the parable of the man who fell among thieves, to answer for himself. The lawyer could not but admit that the poor, wounded, deserted man, and he who had shown mercy on him, really stood in the relationship of neighbours to each other; and that, accordingly, every person within our reach or view whom we have the power of benefiting, is, in the eye of God, the neighbour whom we are to love; in other words, that we are bound to act as neighbours to every such person.

We again see the marvellous wisdom and readiness of Christ in his way of foiling the temptings of the professedly wise and prudent. Thoroughly instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, stored to complete fulness with things both new and old, must the mind have been which, without a moment's delay, could reply to a sudden and ensnaring question, by an illustration so affecting and perfect as the story of the 'good Samaritan.'

SECTION LXV.—*The Commendation of Mary.*

(Luke x. 38-42.)

Christ declined to recommend Mary to leave him and return to her sister who was busying herself in hospitable preparations for her master's comfort and honour. He rather reprov'd the anxious Martha; not for her care for himself, but for the way in which she was showing it. It was a mistake to trouble herself about providing many things; a simple provision would suffice for his need. The meat which Christ had to give was at least as im-

portant as an earthly meal. Mary had chosen the heavenly food ; it was a goodly portion, and it should not be taken away from her.

Might we not naturally have supposed here that Christ would have taken the opportunity of indulging his human feelings, and that he would have told Martha that he at least appreciated her kind trouble? But the supreme importance that he attached to his own office made him put aside the delicacy that might have interfered with the carrying out of his work in any one soul. Mary was listening to his words ; and rather than allow her to be deprived of this precious benefit, Christ let the good Martha, who was lovingly busying herself for him, feel somewhat hurt. He made these two affectionate women see that he had bread to give them that would endure to eternal life.

SECTION LXVI.—*A Second Delivery of the Lord's Prayer.*

(Luke xi. 1-13.)

Christ having again enjoined on his disciples the use of that summary which helps us to lay before God all the wants that a Christian man can feel, proceeded to illustrate the importunity of spirit which should characterise all heartfelt prayer. He encouraged us to act like the man who would take no refusal ; but went on knocking till his importunate persistence could be endured no longer, and his friend was forced to leave his bed, disturb his children, unfasten the door, and give all that had been asked. Christ then repeated some precepts he had delivered on the Mount, adding a promise of the Holy Spirit to those who should earnestly ask that good gift of their heavenly Father.

We see here again the willingness of Christ to help his

disciples, the authority with which he taught, the un-failing readiness of illustration which he possessed, and the knowledge which he claimed of the mind of God.

SECTION LXVII.—*Denunciations of the Pharisees and Lawyers.*

(Luke xi. 37-54.)

A certain Pharisee, whether from motives of respect or curiosity, or a desire to gain credit of those who thought highly of the great prophet, besought Christ to dine with him. When the guests had sat down to meat, it was remarked that Christ had neglected—not what we should call cleanliness, but—the traditions of the elders, for which he showed his contempt by not ceremoniously washing before dinner. Intolerant of all hypocrisy, Christ upon this suffered no feelings of politeness towards his entertainer to prevent a denunciation in exceedingly strong language of the hollow ceremoniousness of the Pharisees. Excessively punctilious they were in observing the rules laid down for outside cleansings by pretenders to sanctity, while their hearts were foul with rapine and wickedness. Fools that they were, not to consider that He who made that which was without made that which was within also! Their state was enough to soil whatever they touched. A far better way than any they adopted of making all their meat pure to them would be to give a portion of whatever served for their use to the needy. But instead of this truly acceptable way, they gave tithe of such trifling things as mint and rue and small herbs. No harm indeed there was in fulfilling thus the letter of the law, but it was most inconsistent at the same time to run counter to its spirit, and pass over judgment and the love of God. Christ then proceeded further to expose the ostentation and cunning of the Pharisees; and then one of the lawyers

was so venturesome as to interfere, and so brought down a storm of righteous invective on his order also. And Christ stayed not his denunciations till he had charged that generation with the guilt of the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world to that time.

Here we see again a fixity of purpose not to be diverted by the conventionalities of society; we see the courage and marvellous force of character displayed by Christ. And we must remember that when he discharged a flood of pitiless vituperation against the Pharisees and lawyers he knew well what he had to expect in return. He knew there were wretched hypocrites who would lie in wait to entangle him, and take the first opportunity of urging the commonalty to demand his life.

SECTION LXVIII.—*Some Cautions and Encouragements
addressed to the Disciples.*

(Luke xii. 1-12.)

Christ having hotly rebuked the Pharisees and lawyers, seems to have quitted the place in which a party of them had been assembled, and to have gone out to the men of lower rank and humbler minds who had gathered together in crowds near the house to wait his approach and listen to his burning eloquence. And he did not meet them in silence. He began by cautioning his disciples earnestly against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; which if not kept rigidly excluded from their hearts would work within them as yeast in a lump of dough. Subtle, indeed, was the guise under which these hypocrites concealed the true nature of their deeds, but the time would come when all should be revealed; and what they had insidiously said in private should be proclaimed to all the world. But the friends he was addressing need fear nothing from the machinations

of their foes. His faithful followers had a protector armed with power over this world and the next; and their real interests should be cared for, whatever might happen to them here. Those who courageously confessed the Son of man in the face of the world should be confessed by him before the angels of God; but those who denied him before men should be denied before the angels of God. His friends needed not to be anxious. They were on the side of goodness and truth. The Spirit, fought against by their persecutors, would take the part of Christian confessors, and teach them how to act and what to speak in every emergency; and those who blasphemed that Spirit could not, in their state of hostility to all that was good and holy, be in a condition to receive forgiveness.

Here we see how Christ took upon himself to make the most astonishing promises to his followers, and to assure them that all who confessed him would have sufficient protection in this world; and glory, to come from himself, hereafter.

SECTION LXIX.—*A Disclaimer on the part of Christ of Temporal Authority and Rank, and a Caution against Covetousness and Indifference to the Concerns of the World to come.*

(Luke xii. 13-59.)

Christ was now interrupted by some one in the crowd, who appreciated the spirit of equity pervading his words, and thought he saw an opportunity of getting a private business settled. The man considered that his brother, who had come into a good property, ought to give up part to him. Seeing the influence that Christ possessed over those who were standing near, he desired him to order what was right between the members of his family. But

Christ would not be tempted to spoil his own work and damage his position by interfering with the judges appointed to administer the law. He had come for a far higher object than the regulation of any one's private affairs. Therefore he answered, 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?' He then took occasion to caution the people around him against every kind and degree of covetousness; for a man's life, he said—the true interests of the being who had immortality before him—depended not on the abundance of the things that he might possess here. A provident, far-seeing, well-to-do man might, it was true, after years of acquisition and success, settle down in affluence with a long course of enjoyment in view. But God might at the moment of his self-gratulation say to him, 'Thoughtless one! this night your life shall be required of you! and then what good will all the things you have spent so much forethought in accumulating do to you? They will all pass into other hands, and you may vainly wish that you had thought of laying up for yourself a good foundation against the time to come, and of providing a treasure in heaven that cannot fail.' This striking illustration was followed up by warnings repeated from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ forbade his disciples to be anxiously solicitous about things required for the body. Their heavenly Father was offering them a place in His kingdom. Let them take care to make that safe, and He would provide all that was really good for them. Their solicitude should be to be found in readiness when the Son of man should come, for that moment might be as sudden to them as the summons to the rich man was to him. Let them see that they were prepared for the return of their Lord at any time. Christ then proceeded to declare the certainty of recompenses, severally, of gracious reward and of dreadful severity. Authority and honours should be allotted to the faithful

servant; deprivation and punishment to the thoughtless, wanton, and tyrannical. But in each case the award should be just. Of those to whom much had been given should much be required. Peter and the disciples with him had the knowledge of their Lord's will, and they, if they did it not, should receive many stripes; but the multitudes who had not the apostles' advantages, and did things for which they deserved stripes, should be beaten with few.

Christ's thoughts were then, not unnaturally, led to his own case. How much even he had yet to do and suffer before he could give account to Him who sent him, and say, 'I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do!' What was the state of things that he had to continue working on? Formalism, inanity, deceit, were offering their deathly resistance. Religion had become a cold stagnation. A celestial flame must be drawn down which should be as the fire of the LORD that, at Elijah's cry, fell and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and the stones of the altar, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And 'Fain would I,' exclaimed Christ, 'this flame of God were already kindled!' But the time had not quite come. The great final agony was yet to be entered upon; unutterable horrors were still to be passed before the great object could be accomplished. He had yet to be baptised in blood, and how straitened was he till he could say, 'It is finished!' And his disciples, too, must expect their share of painful, wearying strife; for his kingdom could not be established in the world without it. Divisions in communities and families must necessarily take place; and great searchings of heart there should be wherever a hearing should be secured by the heralds of the gospel. Christ then reproved his countrymen for not discerning the times, for God had given them sufficient indications. As individuals and as a nation, they were very

shortly going before the Judge; but though there was a heavy account against them, they might yet secure themselves, their creditor might yet be pacified. But if they abused His forbearance and slighted His kind offers, to prison they must go; and there remain till they had paid the very last mite.

The multitude had not waited in vain for an opportunity of listening to one whose words came forth in a flow of divine eloquence; but if they expected flattering speech, they were greatly disappointed. We must notice in this passage not only the recurrence of a claim of high authority over all heavenly things, and of the power of dispensing rewards and punishments hereafter, but the sensitiveness of Christ's human character, the eager natural longing of a man for the arrival of the time when his work should be found complete.

SECTION LXX.—*Remarks on the Calamities that had befallen certain Persons; followed by the Parable of the Barren Fig-tree.*

(Luke xiii. 1-9.)

Christ's questioners here appear to have supposed that men affected by peculiar or remarkable calamities must be sinners above all their neighbours. He not only corrected this notion, but warned them that unless they should repent they would perish as miserably as those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam had fallen. Judgment was before them—indeed, it was not far off. The sword of Pilate's countrymen was only waiting the word to spring from the sheath, and cause blood to flow in torrents. All the towers of Jerusalem were ready to fall, and in their ruins to bury its wicked inhabitants. But

there was yet time to obtain a reprieve. At present they were fruitless, like a barren fig-tree. But the intercessor was still at hand. They had yet a space wherein to show whether they would profit by his care and their Lord's forbearance. If not, their case was hopeless; their place and their nation must be taken away.

We see here Christ's superiority to the prejudices of his countrymen. Those who gave occasion to his remarks very likely thought themselves tolerably good people, and on that account safe from the judgments that had befallen some of their neighbours. 'But conclude not,' said Christ, 'that they were worse than you. Look to yourselves! What happened to those miserable persons is but a small thing compared with the terrible fate that shall come upon you if you continue impenitent, and profit not by my instruction and work.' We see here again the boldness and candour of Christ, and how consistently and completely he avoided every temptation to secure popularity for himself by flattering the people. We see also his foreknowledge of the judgments before them.

SECTION LXXI.—*Cure of the Poor Woman on the Sabbath, and Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven.*

(Luke xiii. 10-22.)

Christ called the poor woman to him in the synagogue; and, without any recorded application from herself or any one else, said, 'Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity!' The laying on of his hands and the cure which followed highly excited the ruler of the synagogue, who, in directing a speech nominally to the people with pretended zeal for Sabbath observance, really aimed a poisonous shaft at the great healer of human infirmities. But Christ

exposed the man's hypocrisy by stating what could not be denied, that it was a general and harmless custom to loose an ox or an ass from the stall on the Sabbath and lead it to watering. Well, before them stood—not a beast, but—a woman; nay, even a daughter of Abraham. She had been bound, not for a day or a night, but for eighteen years. No labour had been required to lead her forth: a word and a touch had loosed her. They might hinder his acts as far as in them lay, but no malice or power of theirs could prevent the gradual establishment of his kingdom. Its beginnings were small, but it should increase till it overcame all opposition. There should be as great a difference between its commencing state and its future progress as there was between a grain of mustard-seed and that to which it might grow—a great tree, in the branches of which the fowls of the air might lodge. Or, God's kingdom in its rise might be compared to a little leaven, which, though exceedingly minute in quantity, was capable in time of leavening the whole mass of meal it was hid in.

We see here, not only the conscious power of Christ, but his perfect independence of all restriction in working his own will. We see his discrimination of what was required—in this case, not the usual confession of faith in himself, but the unveiling of hypocrisy in an obstructor of his kingdom. Here stood the poor woman, erect and praising God; there the cruel man trying to deal an underhand blow against Christ who had saved her. We see also the wisdom which silenced objections by so apt an illustration; and, afterwards, the full confidence possessed by Christ in the future establishment of his kingdom.

SECTION LXXII.—*Reply to a Question about the Number of the Saved.*

(Luke xiii. 23-30.)

It is not easy to ascertain precisely what the man meant who said, ‘ Lord, are there few that be saved ? ’ For it is not at all likely that he spoke in just the same sense as religious people of the present day. Men had very little idea indeed of Christ’s spiritual kingdom at that time, and the word translated ‘ saved ’ has reference in the gospels oftener to temporal deliverance and bodily and mental health than to anything else. Perhaps it will not be wrong then to interpret Christ’s answer thus : ‘ It is true I am now going up to Jerusalem, and you are expecting to see me assume my kingdom there. But the way by which I must enter it is not one of triumph, neither is it an easy way, but a strait, difficult, laborious one. I shall not decline walking in it on that account, neither must those who would share my future honours with me. Equally necessary for them as for myself is the strife that must be maintained. After my labours and conflicts, painful to the flesh, I shall sit down in honour and glory for ever ; and many who have ignobly declined this strife shall then seek to get in with me, but shall not find entrance. Whilst presiding at the celestial feast to which all true children of light shall be admitted, I shall refuse the rewards and honours of my kingdom to those whose only claim will be that they have eaten and drunk in my presence and found pleasure sometimes in listening to my words. I shall recognise there only those who have been willing to bear my cross here. Your belonging to the favoured nation will give you no title of admission if you are workers of iniquity. You must have the faith of your father Abraham, the fear of your father Isaac, the persevering energy of

Jacob, and the self-devotion of the holy prophets if you would sit down with them in the kingdom of God. That is now begun to be set before you Jews first, but there are many among you who, not liking the way to it, will take the wrong road, and so shall not find safety in it. And the time shall come when it will be offered to the Gentiles. Great multitudes of them will receive that which you reject. For there are last who shall be first, and first who shall be last.'

Here we have another instance of lofty independence of character in Christ's refusal to propitiate those who probably in great numbers about that time found pleasure in sitting with him at table and in allowing their ears to be charmed with the rich tones of his voice. And both courage and self-denial must have been needful when he told his poor countrymen that which it all but cost Paul his life to say afterwards. We see also the certainty with which he looked forward to future triumph and exaltation.

SECTION LXXIII.—*Reply to the Pharisees' Warning about Herod.*

(Luke xiii. 31-35.)

The same day Christ received a warning from some of the Pharisees to depart from that district, because Herod had threatened to kill him. We can scarcely imagine that they acted from disinterested kindness. It is more likely they were agents of Herod, who was really too sagacious to run the risk of killing a man popular with the crowds, but imagined that a threat of death would suffice to free his provinces of so inconvenient a personage. Christ, penetrating his crafty plan, called him a fox; and desired that his determination not to be frightened out of his work might be signified to the cruel prince. Herod's

threats should not move him from where he was till he had performed all he had to do there. This might take two or three days, and then he would leave Herod's jurisdiction and go up to Jerusalem; for there, as the great prophet, was he to suffer, where his predecessors had perished before him. And then, from Christ's wounded spirit, came the pathetic lament which any meddling with would spoil: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

We see here Christ's strength of mind in disregarding the threats of a designing tyrant. We see also his knowledge of the end from the beginning, and his resolute determination to go up to Jerusalem to meet his death. We see also the assertion of a readiness to do what no mere man could have undertaken.

SECTION LXXIV.—*The Sabbath-day Banquet at the House of one of the Chief Pharisees, the Cure performed thereat, and subsequent Discourse.*

(Luke xiv. 1-24.)

Christ being invited with many distinguished guests to an entertainment given by a rich Pharisee, saw, before the commencement of the feast, a man in his presence who had the dropsy. It was the Sabbath, and knowing that he was watched, yet determined to heal the sufferer, Christ took the precaution of putting it out of any one's power to accuse him, by first asking the Pharisees and doctors,

‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?’ Impotent silence showed their lack of authority, and left him free to execute his benevolent intentions. After dismissing the poor man, he put the lawyers to shame; who were evidently too ignorant, too narrow-minded, or too timid to admit what was right. He used familiar illustrations similar to those we have before noted, and they could not answer him again to such things. Then, quitting that subject, he showed those who exerted themselves to choose the best places, how they did but expose themselves to mortification; and he taught the great man, his host, that though by asking the rich and noble he secured a feast in return for himself, the only recompense of hospitality worth having (and that because it would be a lasting one) was to be gained in quite a different way, namely by entertaining the poor and the infirm and the blind. It was true that they individually could give no return. But he who thus cared for them should be blessed and recompensed at the resurrection of the just. ‘That will indeed be a worthy reward,’ observed one of the guests, ‘an acceptable recompense we should all be glad to secure! Happy indeed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ ‘Yes,’ said Christ, ‘and yet many such as those I see about me shall refuse the invitation when given them to that feast! All sorts of excuses will be made by people of your station and country; whilst those whom you, the favoured descendants of Abraham, look down upon as poor and blind, fit only to dwell in lanes and hedges, shall be brought in to fill the banqueting-room and enjoy the supper first offered to you. Your folly will be obvious enough then, for when you desire admission it will be too late; and the great Giver of the feast will declare that those who despised His invitation shall not taste of His supper.’

Here we have an instance of Christ's independence when admitted to social intercourse with what we should, in the language of our day, call 'the upper classes.' An endeavour to conciliate them is what we might have expected. But we see nothing of the sort. He at once assumed authority. He acted on the occasion not so much as a companion or an equal, but as the principal personage there. And a not unfriendly remark by a fellow-guest was not encouraged or enlarged upon in the sense intended by the speaker, but was made the occasion of a most distasteful warning. A line of conduct such as Christ's on this occasion might be very improper for one of his humble disciples; but it shows us the greatness of the position he assumed among men, and the paramount importance which he attached to the real object for which he came—an object in comparison of which the ease and conviviality of his entertainer and fellow-guests went for nothing.

SECTION LXXV.—*Warning of the Ruggedness of the Christian Course.*

(Luke xiv. 25-35.)

Christ is on his way to Jerusalem. Multitudes are now excited about his proceedings and speculating on their issue; and people are going after him as men would follow a successful leader conducting his adherents on an easy path to certain position and honour. But he cares for no followers with ideas like those. Any one who will keep close to him must be prepared to sacrifice domestic joys and family endearments—to incur reproach and suffering. Like men about to build, they must see if they can bear the cost. Like a king entering on a warfare, they must consider whether they have strength and resolution enough for it. They must be prepared to forsake

all they have for him. If they join his followers without being able to do this, they are fit for nothing but to be cast out as salt without savour—as far as he is concerned—good for nothing at all.

We see here how Christ, instead of thanking the multitudes for their show of friendship, as his successors might very properly do on similar occasions, spoke as plainly and distastefully to them as he had to his distinguished fellow-guests at the great Pharisee's house. The fact is, he acted as one who could not really be beholden to any human being for anything whatever. He conducted himself not as the humble Christian, but as the Christ of God.

Or, another view of the case may be that in this and in the preceding section we see a renewal of the subtle temptation that seems most frequently to have been thrown in Christ's way: 'Fall down and worship me, and thy kingdom shall be established. Offend not these respectable Pharisees with unwelcome language—let thine acknowledged eloquence charm rather than confound this influential assembly. Yield only in appearance to their prejudices, and then it will be easy to use them in your rise to power.' But the tempter, baffled in this effort, returned to his persuasions by suggesting that it had been right, after all, to leave those hypocritical Pharisees, and purse-proud men. But now in his presence there were the good simple folk, who had come in crowds on purpose to meet their Messiah. Why should he not take them under his command at once, and lead them in irresistible numbers to the holy city? A revolution might be accomplished and the kingdom established without trouble or loss of time. But we know Christ's determination not thus to do his work, and we have here a renewed instance of his candour in showing the people the difficulties they would find in their way to his kingdom.

SECTION LXXVI.—*Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money.*

(Luke xv. 1-10.)

By these two simple parables, the publicans and sinners who came to Christ with an honest desire to receive the blessings he had to bestow, were encouraged; and they as well as himself were defended from the murmurings of the Pharisees.

In taking a consecutive instead of a desultory view of the sayings of Christ, we cannot fail to be impressed with the varied qualities that went to make up his character. We had just seen how he spoke of difficulties in men's way to life—of painful enmities to be expected, cost to be borne, and warfare to be waged. Now there is nothing but encouragement: and the most abandoned are told that there may be safety and recovery for them if they choose, and that the angels of God will feel unwonted joy at their repentance. Again, also, we must note the unanswerable wisdom with which Christ defended his own conduct against the unworthy imputations of his enemies.

SECTION LXXVII.—*Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the Elder Brother who had been always with the Father.*

(Luke xv. 11-32.)

The main object of the first division of this touching and most effective parable cannot I think be missed. It was a new and a more beautiful illustration than had yet been given of the readiness of God to receive an awakened and repenting sinner. For we are here taught that He does this with the exuberance of joy that an affectionate parent feels at the return of a long absent, erring, but

still beloved son, whom he hardly expected ever to have seen again. The latter part—that referring to the elder brother—was intended apparently to serve three distinct objects. In my opinion, (1) it shows the Pharisees that if they had continued to dwell with God in a friendship as unbroken and true as that which subsisted between this Father and his eldest son, they would even then have been wrong in murmuring at a welcome given to a returning sinner. (2) It shows that the best of men, and the most steady of God's servants are liable to feelings of jealousy and undue dissatisfaction when a welcome is given and honours are accorded to men who have newly become followers of Christ, after years of indifference or infidelity or vice. And (3) it shows the superior position, in every material respect, which is assured to men who have patiently and steadily served God from first to last without ever having left His house, or tasted the pleasures of sin. For, to my mind, nothing can be stronger than the expression 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' Could Christ have represented God as saying this to an adulterous, hypocritical, covetous, superstitious, finical, oppressive Pharisee? Such was not the elder son; though for the moment, coming in from a hard day's labour, he was hurt at receiving no attention, and at not having been even remembered so far as to be informed of the news, and sent for to join the festivities. It was but natural at first to feel envious, and to show coldness to a brother who had disgraced the family. Far be it from me to say that we have in the language and behaviour of the elder brother all that was proper, disinterested, affectionate, kind, and good. There was much quite the reverse, for Christ was painting human nature to the life; and a Christian certainly has the feelings of a man, though he does not always exhibit them in so natural a way as the somewhat surly, but much maligned elder son. I suppose, then, that

Christ meant to show the people that though God rejoiced at the recovery of the lost sheep, its real value could not be equal to that of the ninety and nine who had never left His pastures. By this parable he says to the faithful, persevering, unostentatious Christian of everyday life, 'Feel not hurt at the superior notice just now lavished on your erratic brother: for your own brother he is after all. It was meet that on his return we should make merry and be glad, for he was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. Now, as for you, I take you strictly at your word: you have for a long course of years steadily served me without excitement, without the stimulant of external and present reward, or of seasons of enthusiastic exultation; for you needed them not. But contrast your position with that of this poor brother of yours. He has lost all he had. He has laid up for himself no treasures in heaven as yet; but a harvest of bitter regrets for opportunities missed, never to return; and for mischief done, possibly never to be repaired. But as he has been forgiven much, so now he loves much. And many that are last shall be first. So he may yet perhaps render me very great and signal service. But that remains to be seen: he has yet to begin. But you, my son! you have always been under my sight. You have never once forfeited my affectionate approval. The portion that came to your lot, and which you entrusted with no diminution to my keeping, is safe with its increase for ever. Your poor brother, after these holiday festivities, must toil for himself. Let us hope that the events of this day will put him in good heart, and that his labours, which I am sure will recommence with zeal, will be abundantly rewarded. But to you, my firstborn, falls the inheritance of my estate. All that I have is yours.'

Here indeed we recognise the consummate master, who

in a few vigorous and beautiful touches can depict the loving kindness of the heavenly Father to His sons. The characters of two of them are delineated, and those of the most opposite natures. If I have rightly interpreted the parable, the finished beauties of which I must recommend every one to search out for himself in Christ's own words, we see wisdom of the highest kind in the vindication of the ways of God towards different classes of men. How wonderful were the mental resources of him, who as soon as occasion arose, was ready with an illustration the most appropriate that could be conceived, given in the form of a composition which no effort of man's genius has surpassed!

SECTION LXXVIII.—*Parable of the Unjust Steward; followed by warnings against Covetousness, and by the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.*

(Luke xvi. 1-31.)

Christ proceeded with this wonderful series of parables. Addressing at first his followers, he recommenced his instructions by showing them how with real profit to themselves they might use all worldly advantages; and he taught them in this respect to be different from the Pharisees, who did nothing for others with their wealth, and laid up nothing for themselves that would serve them in good stead when the supreme moment should come. The parable was, that a certain rich man, who, like most worldly-minded people, admired success however obtained, received information that his steward was dishonest or careless, and accordingly gave him notice of discharge. That person was at first much perplexed. How should he find subsistence when obliged to leave a situation that suited him so well? He was unused to labour, and too proud to beg. A thought struck him. He kept all his

employer's accounts of the sums due by various persons; so he called on these debtors, and told one who owed a hundred measures of oil, that he would pass his statement for half that quantity, and enter his name as only owing fifty. Another who owed a hundred measures of wheat he promised to pass for fourscore. Thus he made friends for himself who could be counted on for receiving him into their houses, because he had the power of betraying their dishonesty. And the man's master, who admired a stroke of dexterity more than he hated guilt, praised the cleverness of his late steward; and thought, under the circumstances, he had not done badly in providing for himself by his artfulness; and he put up with his own trifling loss rather than disturb his ease by prosecuting an old servant. It should be noted that all the characters in this parable, master, steward, debtors, are all unprincipled men of the world. Not their notions of right and wrong, which were defective in the extreme, but their determination and activity in using every means of securing a future provision in comfort, are the things held out for our imitation. When once the steward had made up his mind, he lost no time and spared no sacrifices to accomplish his purpose. And in this determined pursuit of the object which they set before themselves, the men of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, although the respective prizes set before each often prove worthless to the former, and are always of incomparable value to the latter. The steward's friends, secured by the mammon of unrighteousness, must drop off in time, and their houses must be closed to him at length. But Christ's disciple, by using money or other means aright, may make for himself friends who, when all other things pass away, will receive him into everlasting habitations. We are not to consider money as one of the great blessings God gives to His beloved. Yet if we show ourselves unfaithful by

making an improper and selfish use of the gift of wealth, a comparatively small one in God's eye, how can we expect to have this true riches committed to our trust? No one can serve two masters of different characters and interests; and if we make ourselves the slaves of covetousness and selfishness, we certainly cannot serve God. Christ then told the Pharisees, who began to deride him for speaking lightly of worldly wealth, that things by no means greatly esteemed by God were too often held in high estimation among men. And things they thought lightly of were most serious in God's estimation. They were, for instance, ready to connive at adultery, when it suited their purpose; or even to practise it, disregarding entirely the law of God. Yet, although the kingdom of heaven had now been proclaimed (and many were pressing into it), the law was still in force, and every part of it should be perfectly fulfilled.

Christ then continued his warnings to the indifferent and the covetous by delivering the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In considering this, it should be remembered that the Pharisees' conduct in many things seemed regulated by the idea that a rich man of good station and worldly repute was quite unassailable—safe for this world and the next. The multitudes and the disciples themselves imagined that worldly wealth was an indication of the distinguishing regard of God. They had once been astonished out of measure to hear that there were any difficulties in the way of rich men. 'Who,' they said—'who, then, can be saved?' As for the poor, they were looked on as an inferior order of beings, beneath the notice of a respectable Pharisee; and if they reached paradise at all, they would occupy much the same relative position there as here. Now Christ taught by the parable with which we are so familiar that all this was utterly untruthful. A rich and great man, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, one whom all men thought well of because he did good to

himself, might fare very badly indeed hereafter; whilst the poor man who had passed unnoticed through the world might have one of the highest seats assigned to him at the heavenly feast. But even the torments of the rich man in Hades do not quite drive out his inveterate notion that Lazarus was altogether inferior to himself, for he suggested his being ordered about for his convenience in the service of his distinguished family. The concluding part of the parable teaches us how wrong those are in all ages who think that if they could have advantages somewhat in excess of those which the revelation of God for the time being supplies—if something were, for instance, undeniably placed before their bodily eyes—then they would believe. But Christ says it is not so. In every dispensation there is enough to show that it is of God, if a man will but use what God provides. I may further remark that it is very necessary in reading this remarkable parable to bear in mind the fact that every illustration given by Christ seems to convey some definite lesson or lessons, and that as soon as it accomplishes his immediate objects, it is carried no further. Indeed, it must not be pressed beyond those objects; and accessory points must not be turned into primary or principal ones. In this case Christ was not teaching a general system of theology; he was not showing the efficient means by which a man may attain bliss in heaven, and secure the highest honours there. He was not revealing minute particulars of the state beyond the grave.* He leaves quite unnoticed the faith and patience that must have been possessed by Lazarus. But a lesson is taught to covetous Pharisees and rich men of all ages. Christ tells them that here and in the next world respectively the conditions of men may sometimes be quite

* For is it possible that a lost spirit can at any moment claim the ear of whatever departed saint he chooses to single out, and enter into argument with him?

reversed. Yet this possibility is no necessity, for Abraham himself was a very rich man ; and we read further on in the New Testament of those who suffered the most grievous plagues and calamities in this life, and repented not. Further, we are reminded that if we honestly use the means provided for us by God, we shall see clearly enough how to walk in the path of safety. As for the rich man, it is plain from the parabolic conversation between him and Abraham, that he was without faith, that he had never exercised repentance, that he had made himself no friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and that he had been so satisfied with the pleasures of this world as to give no thought to that which was to come. Christ teaches us that the lot of well-to-do, careless men of that sort will be a dreadful one.

In the parable of the Unjust Steward we have a fresh instance of the masterly power at Christ's command of putting forth a fitting illustration whenever the opportunity came. It is remarkable here how the highest lessons are drawn from the characters and modes of procedure of some despicable men for the guidance of the children of light. An unscrupulous steward with his crafty eye to the future, some greedy dishonest traders, and a careless, unprincipled master, are all described with a knowledge of the world that one could hardly have expected in a man brought up by Joseph and Mary as a carpenter in a very small town. And in the observations with which the parable was followed up we see the same man, who but a few months before had been in so humble a position at Nazareth, not only teaching the multitude, but taking upon himself authority to interpret the law to the very persons who peculiarly prided themselves on their knowledge of it from authorised and constant study. We note again also the exercise of courage in rebuking the

dominant classes. Lastly, we have in this section a further proof of the wonderful fertility of Christ's genius. Always he could aptly frame and relate a story of surpassing interest, by means of which he condensed in a few words that could not be forgotten, rebukes for the unthinking mighty, consolation for the humble, and warning and instruction for men of all times and degrees.

SECTION LXXIX.—*Some Exhortations to the Disciples.*

(Luke xvii. 1-11.)

With reference probably to the scandalous example set by the Pharisees, scrupulous, and to all outward appearance highly religious, yet exacting and licentious, Christ went on to say to the disciples that in the very nature of things here below, offences, that is, things which may make a person stumble, must sometimes come. But this was no excuse to those who occasioned them; and no punishment could be too great for the hypocrite who caused a sincere though weak believer to fall. And Christ added that there would be offences of different kinds. The disciples, who might not err in the same way as the Pharisees, were themselves in danger of causing offence if they indulged an unforgiving spirit. Undue anger in them, and malice and dissensions on account of differences of opinion, would ere long prove to be amongst the greatest difficulties the cause of genuine Christianity would have to contend against. On receiving such admonitions as these, the apostles, sufficiently humble at that moment to discern their own difficulties and deficiencies, prayed for an increase of faith. 'An increase!' Christ rejoined. 'With the least living grain of genuine faith within you, you might achieve whatever success you would in my cause. But it must be faith in me, and not in your own attainments. I employ you, but can do

without you ; and for love of me you must work without looking for reward before your labour is over. The time of refreshment, rest, and recompense, shall come for you ; but not before I shall be established in my rightful position as head over all things. Whatever you may think of your labours and hardships now, you will then consider them as light. Your failings will seem to outweigh your services, and the profit you bring me will appear in your own eyes as nothing.

Thus discoursing, Christ went on towards Jerusalem. And let any one at this point pause and review the few sections embracing the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of Luke, concluding with this passage of eleven verses in the seventeenth, and say if he can find words of admiration sufficiently strong for the man from whose mouth such a flow of sayings could be poured with unhesitating readiness and with perfect adaptability to every sudden requirement. In the present section we may observe the foresight of Christ and his absolute claim to the fruits of all his servants' labours.

SECTION LXXX.—*Rebuke of the Angry Zeal of the Disciples James and John.*

(Luke ix. 51-56.)

Christ said in effect to these intemperately zealous followers, 'It is true that, now on my way to Jerusalem, I am not concealing my claims as when formerly I opposed their publication because my time had not then come. I am indeed going up to my exaltation, attended by those who are to share in my glory. But it is plain that you know but little about the way by which that exaltation and glory are to be reached. Understand that it is not by fire and sword that my kingdom is to be established.

Pity the ignorance of these poor Samaritans, who do not know that salvation is of the Jews, and are so prejudiced as to refuse us the common rights of hospitality because we recognise the temple in Jerusalem as the place that God has chosen as a habitation for His name. But, though a Jew myself, I am not come for one nation only; I am the Son of man, the firstborn of the whole human race. Neither my dignity nor my main objects would be promoted by consigning these misguided ones to destruction for the sake of gratifying your self-importance. Come away; another village will suit us as well.'

We have here a fresh instance of Christ's constant opposition to the power he terms 'the Prince of this world.' A sign from heaven that would effectually neutralise all opposition, gratify friends, bring present ease and lasting fame, and severely punish a few surly half-breeds, was refused; and the weary path of self-denial again pursued.

SECTION LXXXI.—*The Healing of the Ten Lepers.*

(Luke xvii. 12–19.)

On hearing the cry for help uttered by these wretches, Christ at once said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' The poor men knew what he meant, and felt certain he would not send them on such an errand in mockery. They believed the priests would find reason to certify the thoroughness of their cure in the way that Moses had ordained. And it happened unto them according as they had believed. On their way they found that the miracle had taken place. And of the whole ten, there was but one who was less eager to have the brand which separated him from social life officially erased than to express gratitude to God for a wonderful and sudden deliverance. The nine had excuses such as men without hearts are sure to find valid and in plenty. They were doing what they had

been told. They ought to conform without delay to the ordinances of the law. But Christ gives us to know by his touching exclamation that there is something better than the outward show of obedience, that conformity is oftentimes the mask of selfishness. Faith is a saving thing, for it had saved the whole ten; but love and hearty gratitude are Christ's delight. Perhaps he meant that nine out of ten Christians will be quite satisfied with securing their own salvation according to the orthodox rules of their Church or sect, and will leave it to enthusiasts to go out of their way for the sake of glorifying their Lord and Saviour.

We see here the loving nature of Christ yearning for a return of love on the part of those saved by him. We see his appreciation of gratitude; and must also note an implied assertion of his own pre-eminence, not to be fettered by any formal observances, how highly sanctioned soever. Yet we must note at last how he declared faith in himself, and not feeling and gratitude, to be the real saving power.

SECTION LXXXII.—*Answer to the Pharisees, and Instructions to the Disciples about the Coming of the Kingdom of God.*

(Luke xvii. 20-37.)

Christ told his questioners that the kingdom of God was not a thing to be established with ostentation. There was no one place more than another that would necessarily be its seat. Unlike earthly kingdoms, it was not to take its root in this or that part of the land, or city, or even nation. It would come silently, and make an advance no more noticed than is the current of an underground stream by those above the surface. In a certain sense it

had already been set up, even whilst Christ himself was speaking. Already there were men standing there who acknowledged its Prince. But they were not men who made noise in the world. And so in later times, its promoters would not be boasters, seeking notoriety, assuming dignities, and claiming pre-eminence. Then Christ turned from the Pharisees to guard his disciples against mistaking every extraordinary event, after his removal from them, for a sign of his reappearance on earth. His friends, deprived of his personal presence, would long for it again; but his coming would be sudden as the lightning. And the catastrophe that should punish the guilty nation rejecting him should be as little believed up to its very time as the deluge had been of which Noah vainly warned the infidels of his day, and as the destruction of the cities of the plain in the time of Lot. In that day it would not do to think of minor affairs. Remember what happened to Lot's wife, who turned back. Those who should busy themselves at this awful crisis about the ordinary objects of human pursuit would be in danger of losing their existence by their folly—in other words, they should fail of attaining that end to which their existence ought to be devoted. Then, too, the most constant friends, the most inseparable companions, should be parted to rejoin each other no more. One should be taken and the other left. And when the disciples said to Christ, 'Where Lord? Where is it that these things shall happen?' he answered, 'Wheresoever the dead body is left exposed, there will the vultures be gathered together.*'

* As Christ saw fit not to explain his meaning more explicitly, I cannot see it necessary to state my opinion whether the guilty city of Jerusalem—the dead Jewish system—was the body that was to be preyed on by the ruthless conquerors who flew at it, till its very features, all that had covered its skeleton, were clean removed, so that its form could be no more distinguished by the eye of man; or whether the final judgment is referred to, in which the executioners of God's vengeance

We see here Christ attaching surpassing importance to an event of which he gave a prophetic description, and chose to designate as 'the day of the Son of man,' or 'the day of the revelation of the Son of man.' Whatever may be the true significance of these terms, there is no room to doubt of the awful dignity with which Christ's language here invests the person of the Son of man.

SECTION LXXXIII.—*Parable of the Unjust Judge.*

(Luke xviii. 1-8.)

We have seen how Christ could, from the dishonest acts of an unjust steward, draw an example for the guidance of the children of light; and we may now see how he was able to make the practice of an unjust judge serve as an illustration of God's approval of unwearied perseverance in prayer, and an encouragement to those who are tempted to think that their earnest supplications are unheard by their heavenly Father. If the callous judge, from selfish love of ease, avenges the poor widow for whom he has a personal antipathy, shall not the righteous Lord avenge those on whom He has set His love, although for some good reasons unrevealed He bears long with them? Yes; and at the right moment for action it will be seen that God does avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, though God's chosen ones have thus the surest

should fly to do their work wherever spiritual deadness and corruption should be found. Some think that *this* passage refers to the destruction of Jerusalem; and *Matt. xviii.* to the final judgment. Others exactly reverse this opinion. Others again think that each of these passages refers partly to one and partly to the other event. The question is extremely difficult, because it perplexes one to see why the destruction of Jerusalem should be 'one of the days of the Son of man' which should be so ardently desired, and how it was 'the day when the Son of man was revealed.' On the other hand, there are expressions which apply perfectly to the destruction of Jerusalem, but apparently to nothing else.

grounds for confidence, shall the Son of man when he comes find amongst them on earth* a prevalent faith in a timely manifestation of divine power on their behalf?

Again, we must admire the depth of wisdom from which Christ's appropriate and so constantly varied illustrations are drawn.

SECTION LXXXIV.—*Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.*

(Luke xviii. 9-14.)

Christ returned to the subject of prayer; and continued his instruction by delivery of the parable now before us, so well known that it is but necessary to remark here that the Pharisee failed of justification, not because he thankfully acknowledged the effects of divine grace as exemplified in himself, for such acknowledgment did Paul afterwards make in far stronger language, but because he declined to place himself in the position of a sinner, and to solicit that forgiveness which even the most punctilious and virtuous need in the sight of God.

The Pharisee seems to have come before God with the sacrifice and the heart (or rather the heartlessness) of a Cain—with a thank-offering for his own endowments, and an unjustifiable contempt for his brother, who, after all, was the more acceptable before God of the two.

Here I might well repeat the remark closing the preceding section, but I can hardly be content thus to leave a parable enriched with a little sentence that has served as a comprehensive prayer for the penitent, from Christ's time up to the present day. How thankful indeed have

* Or *in this land* (Palestine).

the greatest Christians been for the expressive compendium, ‘ God, be merciful to me a sinner ! ’ Do we not see here Christ’s foreknowledge of the aspirations for all time of those who were to be called by his name ?

SECTION LXXXV.—*The Giving of Sight to the Man who was born Blind.*

(John ix. 1–38.)

In answer to a question put before him by the disciples, which, though half incomprehensible to us, was quite in keeping with the peculiar notions of the Jews at that time, Christ’s decision was in accordance with what he taught when the case of the victims of Herod’s cruelty, and of the eighteen persons crushed by the fall of a tower, had been mentioned. Temporal misfortune came to some individuals, and success to others, in the usual course of divine providence, and neither of them as marks of divine anger, or of the Almighty’s approving regard. But they were ordained in the councils of God for the advancement of the great work He had been pleased to take in hand for the true benefit of mankind. And by means of this particular case, the works of God should be manifested, as would immediately then be seen. As long as Christ lived here he would work with God in furtherance of His beneficent designs. Of his short day little more was now left. The night was fast coming; but till it closed in upon them, he must shine as the light of the world. Acting then in this character, Christ, having performed a certain process and given certain directions which called attention to the approaching miracle, bestowed the gift of sight on one who had been born blind. How the man was treated by those in power among the Jews, and how he was able to defend himself with remarkable acuteness and ability, the narrative informs us with-

out giving us any more of Christ's words till the point when the loving giver of sight appears as the poor man's consoler and teacher. One great benefit had been conferred, but a greater still was to be bestowed. Christ wished this brave, persecuted man to have enlightenment in the best sense of the term. He who had seen nothing at all a few hours back, and had seen none but enemies and cowardly friends since, was now privileged to see—in his mighty benefactor—the Son of God.

In Christ's words before this very extraordinary miracle, we must note his claim to acquaintance with the councils of God, and his perfect confidence in his own powers. And the fact of his assuming the title of 'the Light of the world' ought to have our serious consideration. Why should a man whose whole existence was a life of truth and goodness, one of no high station, whose instructions were addressed generally but to a few either unlearned or else bigoted Jews, how could such a person, possibly be induced to give himself this title? We are familiar with the term; we do see now Christ's words taken everywhere for the instruction and enlightenment of all parts of the world; but how could one in Christ's position have known that this should come to pass? We must note in the concluding words Christ's love and faithful kindness to the poor man persecuted for his sake.

SECTION LXXXVI.—*Discourse and Disputations after the Miracle noticed in the preceding Section.*

(John ix. 39-41, x. 1-21.)

Christ then began to declare what in the nature of things must follow teaching and works such as his. With reference to that which had just been done, he told how numbers of the ignorant, and specially of those who

acknowledged their ignorance, would be enlightened ; and how numbers who were puffed up with conceit of their own wisdom and discernment would, in refusing his teaching and help, be found to be really blind at last. The Pharisees asked, ‘Do you mean to insinuate that we, masters of Israel, brought up at the feet of illuminated Rabbis—that we, students all our lives of the law, require light from you, who have never, since childhood, received instruction from our doctors, and have avowedly discredited the teaching of our learned elders?’ Christ replied, ‘It is your boasted knowledge that itself convicts you. Had you been without the law and the prophets, had you possessed no opportunities of studying them, you would have had excuse. But you admit that you know them much better than others—in fact, that the populace as compared with you have no knowledge at all—therefore your sin remaineth. You call yourselves shepherds of the flock, but you take not the proper way of entering the fold. A good shepherd comes in by the door, knowing that the keeper will open it to him and turn away all others. The sheep recognise him. Each flock knows the voice of its own shepherd, and follows where he leads it forth. But from one who is not their shepherd at all, but a stranger, the sheep will flee.’ We can hardly wonder that the Pharisees failed to apply this allegory to themselves and to recognise Christ as the door. He therefore declared more explicitly that he was himself the door—that it was now through him alone that pastors had authority to enter. All who had come before him with claims such as he now put forward were thieves and robbers, but their authority had never been recognised by God’s faithful flock. Then Christ repeated that he was the door. Neither pastor nor sheep could rightly enter but by him. Evil-intentioned men, eluding the porter, came furtively to kill and destroy ; but Christ was come that they might have life, and that they

might have it more abundantly. Then, changing the metaphor, Christ describes himself as greater than the porter, more than the door, pre-eminent above the duly admitted pastors. He was the master of all, the supreme owner of the sheep; the chief, the good shepherd. He was not one who had no interest in the sheep, one who tended them for wages, and would naturally value his own life more than theirs, and accordingly flee when a wild beast appeared, and leave them to be torn by it. No. The good shepherd would give his own life for the sheep. Christ then declared that in his determination thus to lay down his life for his sheep, he had the sanction of his Father. And his sheep were not only those few disciples around him, not only the faithful of Israel. Many others should be people of his pasture and sheep of his hand. Those in due time he must bring in, and there should at length be one fold and one shepherd. For laying down his life, in the character of shepherd of God's flock, the Father loved him, but his charge would not be abandoned by this act. He would resume his life and his office together, no more to part with either one or the other. And he had unquestionable power to fulfil his purposes, for in so doing he was but accomplishing the object for which the Father had sent him into the world.

Here we have Christ declaring that through himself alone pastors could receive the right and authority to exercise their office. We find him assuming power above all of them, and describing himself as the absolute owner of the flock. He states that the blessing of eternal life would accrue to those for whom he should die, and that he had knowledge of the Father as the Father had of him. He claims an entirely superhuman power over life by asserting that he could in his own case lay it down and take it again.

SECTION LXXXVII.—*Discourse in Solomon's Porch.*

(John x. 22-42.)

In reply to complaints of the Jews present at the feast of Dedication, that he had not told them plainly whether he were the Christ or not, he said that they had no ground for such insinuations. His words asserted and his works exhibited his claim. It was only unbelief that could see no proof in either, and this unbelief of theirs showed that they were not of his sheep who knew and followed him and received from him the blessings of eternal life and safety. Security under his protection was perfect, for he and the Almighty Father were one. Then the Jews who had found fault because he had not spoken plainly about his pretensions were proceeding to stone him for speaking thus unequivocally. But Christ said that as the works of God were all very good, even so were his own; and for which of his avowedly good works did they stone him? And when the Jews had excused themselves by saying that it was for blasphemy that they had sought to inflict capital punishment, Christ showed them in a manner adapted to their peculiarities, by an argument essentially Jewish, and an illustration befitting their habits of reasoning, how impossible it would be for them to convict him of blasphemy for what he had just said. He could adduce expressions in their own Scriptures, whose literal accuracy they were so strenuous in maintaining, which must silence all his accusers. And was it not the fact that his works were the works of God? Were they not as truly godlike as those ascribed by Moses to the great Creator Himself?

We see here that Christ claimed the power of bestowing eternal life, and of keeping what he chose to hold against

all opponents. We see also that he claimed perfect unity with the Almighty Father, and compared his own works to God's. We must note also his ability to use any weapon whatever that should be the best suited at the moment to foil his adversaries.

SECTION LXXXVIII.—*Answers respecting Divorce and Marriage.*

(Matt. xix. 1-12; Mark x. 1-12.)

Christ had retired to a part beyond Jordan for a time. But he was never safe from intrusion. Multitudes flocked to him; and he who had suffered from provocation, perversity, and persecution immediately resumed his kind instructions and the exercise of his benevolent works. Among the crowds came Pharisees, in reply to whose questions Christ taught imperatively the inviolability of marriage—the union indissoluble, except by death, between man and wife. This he showed was to be gathered from Scripture. The Pharisees, knowing how distasteful this doctrine was to the powerful and selfish, pressed Christ further to commit himself against the custom of divorce, so greatly in vogue in those days. They even persuaded themselves they had an advantage over him, not from their traditions, which they knew he would not admit, but from Scripture itself. Christ, therefore, did not deny that the Israelites had been allowed to put away their wives for minor causes (Deut. xxiv. 1), but explained how that was because of the hardness of their hearts, which without this relaxation in the absolute fitness of things, would have led to worse evils than this separation of man and wife. Long after the time of Moses there were eminent men in sacred history who took more than one wife without, on that account, suffering recorded rebuke from God. But now the time was come when a different order of things was to

prevail. Henceforth there should be recognised but one valid cause for this undoing of the marriage tie, either by man or woman. Such was the answer addressed to the Pharisees, and doubtless unpalatable to the upper classes of Jewish society. Even the disciples were astonished. 'Are we all to be thus restricted?' they said. 'When once married, is a man bound for life, except for one single cause, to one woman only, however tired he may become of her? If that is the case, he had better not marry at all!' Christ told them that now they were going too far. It was by no means every man that could act on a saying such as they had just uttered. It was but to a very limited class that it was given to abstain with any propriety from that ordinance of God, the married state. But if a man had no fitness or inclination for it, and judged that he could serve God better single than married, let him adopt the disciples' recommendation. Let him, but let none others, continue unmarried.

Here we find one teaching with authority indeed! For we see Christ first taking upon himself to explain the Scriptures, and afterwards claiming possession of an insight into the divine mind, a power of knowing within what precise limits it was the intention of the Spirit that the mark of perpetual and universal obligation should be stamped. For he tells us here how parts of the sacred Scripture itself might be superseded. He takes on himself to declare, that when divinely delivered injunctions and Scripturally sanctioned customs bear reference to peculiar circumstances existing in times past and not now, they serve more as mementoes of human imperfection than as exponents of the unchangeableness of the Law of God. Having thus taught with authority, Christ came down to the ordinary level of those around him and exhibited the most practical wisdom, or rather what we now term per-

fect good sense, in disposing of the extravagant and hasty conclusion drawn by the disciples from some of his previous words.

SECTION LXXXIX.—*Christ Blesses Little Children.*

(Matt. xix. 13-15; Mark x. 13-16; Luke xviii. 15, 17.)

Christ hesitated not to reprove the disciples who in their concern for his personal dignity and comfort (and perhaps their own) rebuked those who were bringing young children to him that he might touch them, or lay his hands on them and pray. He uttered those words so sweet to parents and to lovers of children, and to children themselves as soon as they can understand them, or long before they can understand them, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.’ He then took occasion solemnly to declare that whosoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child should in nowise enter therein.

We meet with expressions sometimes which go straight to the heart. We are incapable of drawing a cold deduction whilst they are so busy with our feelings. Here, for instance, we are inclined to do nothing but recognise with affectionate admiration the tenderness of Christ’s character and the gentle ways in which he showed his love for the very youngest.* But our main object, I may say our duty, calls us to more than that. We must not leave this section without noting well the bold authority with which he took upon himself to declare the qualifications to be possessed and the conceits to be abandoned by those who

* For the word for ‘*infants*’ used by Luke is identical with that translated ‘*babe*,’ used by the same Evangelist in his gospel (chap. i. 41, 44, ii. 12, 16), and in Acts vii. 19; and also by Peter in 1 Pet. ii. 2, where the word ‘*babes*’ is qualified with the participle ‘*newborn*.’

would enter the kingdom of heaven. We cannot but ask ourselves here, Who was he, that he should require simplicity, readiness to love, docility, absence of confidence in one's own wisdom—all these things in relation to himself—alike from Scribes and Pharisees, publicans and sinners, from Nicodemus and Nathanael, from Thomas, Peter, James, and John, from all indeed, high and low, learned and ignorant, who would be members of the community he was establishing? Again, though Christ never trifled, never did a thing without meaning, yet he allowed some very young babes to be brought to be touched by him, and he laid his hands on them. Now if this was for no advantage to these unconscious little ones, the disciples must have been right in trying to keep them off. But his expressed approval of the act of those who brought these babes was equivalent to a declaration that there was virtue in his touch, and that a blessing by no means unreal or valueless accompanied the laying on of his hands.

SECTION XC.—*The Young Ruler's Application, and Christ's Instructions to his Disciples thereafter.*

(Matt. xix. 16-30, and xx. 1-16; Mark x. 17-31; Luke xviii. 18-30.)

To the rich young man who called him '*good*,' Christ said in effect, 'You consider me to be a person of extraordinary wisdom and holiness, a successful teacher, a faithful and able friend of the distressed. And so far you do well. But if your conception of my nature and character stops here, what right have you to call me "good?" There is none essentially "good" but One, that is God.* Now as to your

* It is right, however, to notice here that, according to the best authorities, the text of *Matthew* omits the '*good*' in the first question of the rich ruler, and gives Christ's first answer thus: 'Why dost thou question me concerning that good thing (or concerning what is good)? There is One that is good (or He who is good is One).' It is supposed that the original passage in the first gospel was tampered with by some tran-

question. You belong to those who are under a dispensation wherein God has been pleased to declare His will by the delivery of a law from Mount Sinai which has not been abrogated yet. To that law then I must refer you; and if I am but the virtuous teacher and benevolent man you seem to take me for, I can carry you no further.' 'But my conscience does not want relief touching the observance of the law,' the young man rejoined; 'I am longing for something beyond that, and which I do not find mentioned in the books of Moses. I want to know how I may inherit eternal life. You have spoken of it more clearly than any before you. Tell me what I must do to win that.' Thus he pressed the new teacher again and again with his questions. His amiability, earnestness, and probity moved the sympathy of Christ, whose affectionate human nature was touched with love to this virtuous young man.* He accordingly saw fit to open out to his questioner a grand opportunity, and to offer him the means of really finding the 'good,' and of learning by personal experience how it comes to men through the cross. 'Cast in your lot with this poor company now consorting with me on my way to take my kingdom. But you must know that I use no worldly means. Time after time I have rejected such aid. I will accept your personal services, but your riches will do my cause no good. Come with me, and so return the love I feel for you. But we must be relieved of the in-

scribers, and altered in accordance with its parallel passages in *Mark* and *Luke*. The reader may consult Dean Alford's notes in this matter, or the very cheap 'Tauchnitz Edition' of the New Testament by *Constantine Tischendorf* (1869), which particularises the variations between our 'Authorised Version' and the 'Sinaitic,' the 'Vatican,' and the 'Alexandrine' Codices.

* It appears to me that the chronology of the gospels, as far as we can make it out, will not allow us to suppose, as some have done, that this young man, after his departure thinking better of what Christ had said, and becoming his follower, was identical with Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary, of the family that Jesus loved.

cumbrance of your wealth. You will never find eternal life in that, and there are numbers of poor creatures among whom you might distribute it with great advantage both to them and yourself. You shall lose nothing, but on the contrary gain beyond all estimate in doing so. You shall have treasure enough, treasure in heaven. You shall find that which is really good. Come! Take up this cross and follow me!’ Unhappily this was too much for the young man’s resolution; and when Christ saw that he sorrowfully let the great opportunity slip, he turned to his disciples and startled them by speaking of difficulties in the way of rich men who would enter the kingdom of God. In amazement they exclaimed, ‘Who then can be saved? If the wealthy and respectable find it difficult to secure themselves, what will become of others? How then can common people, whom the Pharisees teach us to hold in contempt, have any chance at all of entering the kingdom?’ But Christ explained that the difficulty arose from the temptation, great both with rich and poor, to trust in riches. It was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for one who made riches his chief good to enter into the kingdom of God. The disciples, who had been full of the idea that the court of the Messiah would be crowded with the wealthy and influential, held great debates among themselves at this statement, thinking still where the poor would be if their betters were so ill qualified. But Christ told them that though it was impossible either for rich or poor who trusted in anything but God to enter His kingdom, yet His help was sufficient for men in all conditions. Then Peter, having heard the inducement held out to this young ruler, of ample recompense and treasure above, asked whether a promise like that might be considered as applying to himself and the disciples then accompanying him. ‘Will the same measure be extended to us?’ he asked. ‘For what that young man was told to

do, we have actually done. We have already left all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore?' Then Jesus told his apostles that those of them who should continue faithfully to follow him in his temptations should have a greater than common reward. In the regeneration, the times of restitution of all things, when the Son of man should sit on his throne, they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And, leaving their particular case out of consideration for a moment, Christ taught that every one who abandoned all worldly advantages and comforts for the kingdom of God—for Christ's sake and the gospel's—should find such inward satisfaction and divine consolation that, through all the persecutions that might be their lot, happiness even in this world would come to them a hundredfold greater than any that their relinquished advantages could have given; and that in addition to this they should inherit true riches, receive the honour of admission to God's family above, and have that eternal life for which the young ruler had felt so ardent a desire. Yet, to caution those around him against thinking too much of themselves on account of their personal knowledge of him in the flesh, Christ added that many that were first should be last. The individual exertions of some at that moment with him should not even find a recorder. And the last might be first. Those who had received their commissions from Christ himself on earth should see men called from the most unlikely posts whose services should be so brilliant as to put those of all his personal followers into the shade. Quiet men in common life might be found at times to do more for the advancement of the gospel than some of its professed teachers. Some who had laboured steadily would feel disappointment at witnessing the success of men coming long after themselves into the field. But Christ taught them they should have no ground for complaint. They should

receive their due reward. By the parable unhappily placed at the beginning of the twentieth instead of the end of the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, he spoke in effect thus:— ‘ You cannot say that the householder is guilty of injustice who pays the full stipulated wages to those who have worked for him from early morning, though he may choose of his bountiful goodness to give as much to others who have only been employed for the last hour or two of the day. Want of occupation had been no pleasure to these last. They would have taken work before had the opportunity offered; and God, who has the right to do what He will with His own, opens the doors of His vineyard at the times that suit His purposes best, and will not let them be losers because He called them not earlier.* I must not only repeat what I have just said, that many last shall be first and first last, but add, that of the many who will be called to labour in the establishment of my kingdom comparatively few will be chosen for distinction on account of eminent success or extraordinary self-devotion.’

In the former part of this section we see how Christ reproved the young ruler for ignorantly calling him ‘ *good.*’ But when at last he said to this wealthy proprietor, ‘ Sell all you have and follow me; strip yourself of every possession on earth for my sake; for nothing created can equal in value what you will find in me,’ did not Christ virtually admit that he had right to the title of ‘ *good?*’ The genuineness of his humanity was shown in his burst of affection towards an earnest and amiable youth who had set an excellent example in many things, though without strength

* The comparative condition of these labourers amongst themselves bears no analogy to that of the forgiven prodigal and his elder brother. The eleventh-hour labourers had been as willing to work in the morning as those who had been first called. May not this parable teach incidentally that all men of ready minds will have their opportunities sooner or later, if they patiently look out for them?

of purpose (at that time at least) to leave the beaten track and make a great venture for a splendid prize. We see how Christ afterwards scrupled not to promise and allot places of distinction and reward to be given in the times of the regeneration, many ages after he should be taken from his disciples. We see also the authority and power of illustration with which he vindicated God's ways.

SECTION XCI.—*The Raising of Lazarus.*

(John xi. 1-46.)

When Christ, who was still perhaps in the region beyond Jordan, was told by the disciples that Lazarus was dangerously ill, he intimated at once, though in a way misunderstood by them, that not death, but the glory of God, should be the final issue of his friend's sickness, and that the Son of God should be glorified thereby. Two days afterwards he said to them, 'Let us go into Judea again.' But, as he had not long before left the neighbourhood of Jerusalem because attempts had been made against his life, the disciples were bewildered by his proposal. Christ seems then to have explained that when there was no special work for him to do in Judea he could with propriety leave it in order to avoid an immature crisis, but now that there was something required there for the fulfilment of his course, there he must be to do it. The time allotted was but limited; the day of his presence on earth would soon close; but whilst its light remained he should walk on his way, assured that no obstacle would cause him an untimely fall. Then, knowing what had happened in the family he loved, he said, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may wake him out of sleep.' The disciples, anxious to keep their master and themselves out of danger, urged what they took for a favourable symptom as another reason why the perilous journey should not be undertaken. Then

Christ told them plainly that Lazarus was dead; and, however painful this event, he was glad for the sake of the establishment of their faith that he had not been present to rebuke his friend's disorder. Nevertheless it would still be well that they should go to Bethany. The affectionate exclamation from Thomas that followed this decision proves how personally dear their master was to the disciples and how dangerous the journey to Judea was thought for him. When Christ had reached Bethany and received Martha's respectful plaint, he said to her, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' Martha professed her belief that such would be the case at the resurrection at the last day. Christ then said in majestic words, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Inherent in myself is the power of giving life to the dead, a power without restriction as to time or place. Though dissolution may have come to a believer in me, yet sooner or later, even whensoever I so shall will it, that man shall live. And no one who believes in me can be called truly subject to death, for to him eternal life is secured in me. Believest thou this?' Martha gave the confession of faith in Christ which his words were probably intended to bring out, but still seemed to think they did not touch her present grief. But our object forbids our lingering amongst the beauties of the affecting narrative, or staying to admire the proofs of Christ's human sympathy not expressed in recorded words from his mouth. We must pass on, therefore, to the moment when he saw that the time for the exercise of his power was come and he said, 'Where have ye laid him?' Then came the command, 'Move the stone away.' Then the elder sister showed alarm—and we must remember the character of the Martha of the supper—propriety and decency forbade such a thing. But her remonstrance was no more successful than her appeal to Christ had been on another occasion, and by a mild reproof he taught her

that he would suffer no dictation as to the course of his procedure, and that implicit confidence towards himself was requisite in those who would receive a benefit from him. Then when his order had been obeyed, he lifted up his eyes and thanked his Father for hearing him, and gave utterance to those thanks in order that the people standing by, who were shortly to see the event, might know the relationship existing between him and the Father. Then his eyes, which had been fixed on heaven, the abode of life, were turned down to earth, to the habitation of the dead, and he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus! come forth!' And he that was dead heard the voice of the Son of God and came from his tomb. Jesus said to the startled sisters, probably motionless with joy, 'Behold again your brother alive and sound! You will be glad with your own hands to help him cast off the bandages of the grave. Unbind him; let him rise up, and leave this place of death.'

We see here again how Christ, compassionate and tender-hearted as he was, never allowed the immediate comfort even of those he dearly loved, to influence for a moment his determination to take every opportunity of manifesting the glory of God. We see once again his courage; and must note also the susceptibility of his human feelings, unable to resist the contagion of grief, though he knew how soon that grief was to cease. We see also the majestic claim he makes. Did any other man ever say, 'I am the resurrection and the life'? Could any other man have said it without being ridiculed? We see also his confidence of being able to prove his words by an act of unheard-of power.

SECTION XCII.—*Exhortations and Prophecies during the last Journey to Jerusalem.*

(Matt. xx. 17-28; Mark x. 32-45; Luke xviii. 31-34.)

Christ advertised his disciples of the result that his journey to Jerusalem would lead to. He had previously foretold his sufferings and death, and now he gave them minute particulars of some things that were to be done to him; but he concluded by repeating the announcement that three days after death he would rise again. And then came the extraordinary petition from the mother of Zebedee's children in behalf of her sons James and John. It is difficult to imagine how it could have been presented whilst such things were still sounding in the ears of the twelve. Perhaps the disciples were still resolutely determined not to believe these declarations; or perhaps Salome when she came to him had not heard anything of them. Christ kindly showed his readiness to attend to her, and when the request had been stated, said, 'You know not what you ask. Little do you think what kind of way it is that leads to the highest point of glory in my kingdom. My own human nature, perfect though it be, and prepared by resolute anticipation, will shrink from what is to be met with in it. And will you be able to drink of the cup that I shall all but hesitate to take? Are you determined and steadfast enough to be baptised with the baptism of blood that I must be baptised with?' They declared that they were sufficient for these things. So Christ said, 'Well, utterly unprepared as you are now, the time will come when you shall have strength given you to follow me; when you, James, shall die a bloody death as one of the first martyrs for my cause; and you, John, shall lead a life of long-continued irksome persecutions, and steadfast self-denying opposition to evil. But it is not

proper for me now to promise the two highest posts in my kingdom. To sit on my right and on my left is mine to give only for those for whom it is prepared of my Father.' Then, to appease the jealous murmuring of the ten against James and John, Christ taught that the posts of honour in his kingdom would not be assigned to those who exercised lordship and arbitrary authority like the princes of the Gentiles. The great ones amongst his followers should be those who rendered the greatest services to the brethren. Whosoever would be chief among them, let him be their servant. In their present state of mind, their feelings would be scarcely those of envy with regard to the self-sacrificing ones who were in a fair way for securing the highest heavenly seats. Even he himself, the great lord of the kingdom, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here we have the fact brought before us once more of Christ's complete foreknowledge of the overwhelming agonies that would close his course. We see also his kind considerateness of manner, and the wisdom with which he healed the divisions of his disciples. We have also a most important statement of the great object for which he came—to give his life a ransom for many.

SECTION XCIII.—*The Cure of the Two Blind Men near Jericho.*

(Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43.)

Christ's reported words with reference to this transaction were but few; but his silence was in some sort as significant as words could be, for when the blind had addressed him as the 'son of David,' no remonstrance came from his lips. Christ thought fit to make the applicants state explicitly what they wanted before he said,

‘Receive your sight.’ He then dismissed them with the assurance that their faith had made them whole.

We see here how Christ again accepted with approval the title of ‘son of David.’ If we look to the Psalms and the prophets, we may find what the assumption of that title carried with it. Whilst the son of David could not possibly be other than a real man, things were said of him in the old Scriptures that could hardly indicate a nature below that of the everlasting Lord of all. Then we have from Christ another commendation of faith in himself. This time it could not certainly be faith in God which was so efficacious; for according to the ideas of these poor blind people, doubtless David and his descendant must have equally been men. Learned scribes themselves had not then fathomed the mystery now solved for us of the double nature assigned to David’s son. Plainly, then, it was faith in himself personally that Christ spoke of here, as manifested in those who took benefit from his miracles.

SECTION XCIV.—*The Conversion of Zacchæus.*

(Luke xix. 1-10.)

‘Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.’ These were the genial words that reached the ear of the rich publican who, in his determination to see Christ, had climbed up a tree that grew near to the entering in of Jericho. Astonished though he was, he instantly came down to welcome the self-invited guest. His ready mind was soon won over, and his heart animated with gladness. And when the power of Christ’s presence had drawn out his well-known declaration and engagement, so strange from the mouth of a publican, he had the joy of hearing the assurance, ‘This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham.’ And Christ added in the ears

of those around, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

The influence Christ was able to exert is shown by the great alacrity with which the rich chief of the publicans welcomed him to his house. We see what opportunity Christ had at command at that time of gaining the assistance of the people, when we find so great a multitude following, whilst he was making a kind of royal progress to Jerusalem, that a person short of stature had no chance of seeing him in the way without getting above the heads of the crowd. In the distinction conferred on Zacchæus of being made the selected host of one who was supposed to be going to ascend the throne of David, we see Christ's approval of a determination to overcome difficulties in the way of a personal acquaintance with himself. Then we see that the influence put in force over the mind of Zacchæus whilst in the branches of the tree, was but an earnest of the converting power soon after exerted upon his heart when within the house. Further, we have Christ's assertion that his own entry had brought salvation there. And we must note the wisdom and appropriateness of his appeal to the loyalty of the Jews, among whom in good old times every son of Abraham was counted noble. A man bringing forth such fruits of repentance and beneficence as Zacchæus had not forfeited his title. Lastly, we have a declaration of Christ's goodness in seeking, and his power in saving, the lost.

SECTION XCV.—*The Parable of the Ten Pounds.*

(Luke xix. 11-28.)

Christ, finding that the people rightly judged from his words and actions that his journey was towards the capital, and that things would be there done which should in due time exalt him to royal dignity, but seeing, too, how

utterly they misunderstood the nature of the kingdom he was going to set up, and the position of those who should take office and rank therein, delivered a parable which showed the responsibilities of his servants, the opposition he would meet in establishing his claims, and the punishment that his enemies would receive. A person of royal pretensions was supposed to go to an imperial city to obtain regular investment of titles and rights justly belonging to him as heir to a certain kingdom. Before setting out he intrusted to each one of his ten servants a little money, the same amount in every case (a coin of small value called a *mina*), with the express understanding that each was to do the best he could with it for his lord's account during his absence. Personal attendance on him could not then be given; so he pointed out a way of serving him in the occupation assigned, and then left them to themselves. Whilst he was away claiming his rights, the citizens of the place, who ought to have accepted his rule with gladness, opposed his objects with their utmost endeavours, and sent a deputation to the imperial court to say that they would not have him to reign over them. However, in spite of their machinations, he perfectly established his claim, and returned invested with absolute power. The first step he took then was to call his servants together and require an account from each of the gains that had been made for him by the employment of his money. Generally speaking, he found that they had worked diligently and were able to show a profitable return. One could lay down before him an increase of tenfold, another of five, and so on. Honours were accorded to these servants of very great and unexpected magnitude—rewards out of all proportion to the profits they had gained for their lord, but yet in strictly just proportion to the comparative difference of results shown among themselves. Thus, none could have thought of receiving the govern-

ment of several cities because he had gained a few little coins for his lord. But if he that had gained ten minæ had ten cities, he that had gained five had, in the same proportion, five. But there was a certain servant who was called 'wicked,' not because of carelessness in losing his mina, or of dishonesty in spending the profits from it, or in parting with it for some advantage to himself. He had done none of these things. He had only laid it safely up, and so was able to return to his lord the precise sum entrusted to him. But there was no increase. He pretended to justify himself by comments on the austerity of his master, but no such excuse availed him. If the man had really expected a rigorous and minute reckoning, self-interest would have suggested that, if too idle to trade himself, he might at least have put out the money in some remunerative way; and though brilliant profits could not result from such a course, yet there might at least have been a little customary interest to show. 'You must not expect,' said the stern but generous king, 'that I am going to give you a city to rule over because you bring me back my one pound; you have shown that you are not fit for the management of anything at all. The trifling sum you held I now take from you and give to him that has ten pounds. For whosoever has acquired possessions in the way that faithful man has shall have still more given to him; and from the man who has never exerted himself to gain anything shall be taken even the little with which he was at first intrusted.' Thus ignominiously was the man treated who had failed to be of use to his master. But a severer fate was in store for the enemies who had actively plotted against their rightful prince; they were ordered to be brought and slain before his face.

We again see the resolution and candour of Christ; for the delivery of this parable must have proved a severe

check on the enthusiasm of the multitudes thronging his steps, in expectation of witnessing dazzling achievements on his part, and sharing handsome advantages themselves. As we cannot doubt that the nobleman of the parable was intended to represent himself, we see the rigorous claim he makes on his servants, and the authority he assumes of rewarding whom he will in the kingdom of God, and of ordering his enemies to destruction.

SECTION XCVI.—*The Breaking of the Alabaster Box of Ointment.*

(Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-8.)

There is great seeming propriety in what the disciples said, that much more real good would have been done if the cost of the box and ointment had been given to the poor; and I believe that in any other but the then existing circumstance the remark would have been perfectly true. But, 'No,' said Christ; 'there is one now amongst you—and I am he—greater and more worthy of every token of regard than any other person who has appeared on earth since its creation. I shall be with you but a little time longer. During that opportunity, so precious for you, nothing too great or costly can be used for putting honour upon me. My life will soon be taken by enemies, whilst my usual attendants will be scattered like sheep by the wolf. For the moment, they will not be able to render my body all the pious honours they would. This loving woman has done what she could now; let the act be taken as an earnest of what she and you would wish to do then. So highly do I appreciate the deed, that I solemnly declare that wherever the gospel founded on my thus foreshadowed death shall be announced, and that will be throughout the whole world, there also shall what this woman has done be spoken of for a memorial of her.'

Here we see first Christ's goodness in coming forward in defence of the loving Mary. But what we must principally note is the estimation in which he taught those around to hold himself. What could be more arrogant, and I may say offensive, than for any one of the very best and greatest amongst other men of whom we have ever known, or read, or heard, than to say that money would be better spent in an honour done to his person than in supplying the wants of the destitute poor? Yet Christ scrupled not to say this, and I never heard of the saying having caused the least feeling of offence in the most delicate mind. We see also how clearly he foreshowed his death, and the heralding of the salvation to spring therefrom among the nations of the world; and how he claimed the power of causing what things he would concerning himself to be recorded for all future generations.

SECTION XCVII.—*Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.*

(Matt. xxi. 1-9; Mark xi. 1-10; Luke xix. 29-40; John xii. 12-19.)

Christ's directions to two of his disciples include a minute description of the circumstances under which they would find a young ass which would serve him to ride on, for his formal and public entrance into the city of David. And he told them also to say to any who would object to their removing the colt, that 'the Lord had need of it.' And at the end of the section we read that when the Pharisees desired him to rebuke his followers, who were ascribing royal if not divine honours to him, he answered, 'I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

Here we have Christ exhibiting a knowledge of a state of things in existence at a place some little way off—at least out of sight. We note further from his

words here either that the appellation 'the Lord' had become a common one for many persons to apply to him, or that he assigned so great an importance to the public act he was just going to carry out, as to make it understood to those around that the counsels and purposes of the LORD (JEHOVAH) required him to engage in it. Then at last we see Christ distinctly refusing to silence the cries of 'Hosannah in the highest! Blessed is the King of Israel! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' He received all these as correctly referring to himself. He went even further in the strong expression about the stones crying out; and declared that if man's voice were dumb when he chose to display himself as Zion's king, inanimate objects would break into voice to hail him. Could self-assertion possibly be carried further? Yet who has attributed arrogance or self-conceit to Christ?

SECTION XCVIII.—*The Tears over Jerusalem, and the Second Cleansing of the Temple.*

(Matt. xxi. 10-16; Mark xi. 11, 15-19; Luke xix. 41-48.)

Knowing what would certainly befall the devoted city, Christ wept over it whilst predicting its dreadful fate. Then, having entered the temple, he cleared it of the traffickers and all that they sold and bought therein, and uttered the indignant remonstrance, 'It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.' The priests and scribes then, not being able to endure his acts and the salutations given him by the children who cried Hosannah! asked if he heard what they said. Christ admitted that he did, and answered in words that should perhaps be combined with those to the Pharisees, noticed at the end of the preceding section, 'Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?'

We have here first to observe Christ's prescience and boldness. He knew what should come upon the guilty city, and allowed no fear of the Jews to prevent his telling them of it. And what he said contained an implied declaration that he had power in himself to prevent their approaching calamities, and that he would have done so if they had recognised him in his true character. We must notice also the completeness of his human nature. No tears of his could do the citizens of Jerusalem any good, and he knew that their punishment was ordained by a just God; yet, as a man, he could not help weeping at the thought of it. Then we must note that the courage prompting the expulsion of the money-changers and other dealers by his single arm did not evaporate with the performance of that deed. He stood not dismayed or amazed at what he had done, but publicly justified his act by an apt quotation from Scripture. And, lastly, his answer to the chief priests and scribes was nothing less than a direct application to himself of a passage in the Psalms, where David is most unequivocally addressing God.*

SECTION XCIX.—*Christ Informed of the Desire of some Gentiles to see him, and Discourse thereupon.*

(John xii. 20-36.)

It is not necessary for our purpose to discuss the question whether the sayings of Christ here recorded were uttered in the hearing or in the absence of the Greeks (most likely proselytes come to worship in the temple) who wished an interview with him. In either way, the desire they expressed was the occasion of the words before us, which seem to have carried the following import:—'The Gentiles then have heard of the Son of man. The desire of these

* 'Jehovah our Lord,' Psalm viii. 1, 9.

strangers to obtain a knowledge of him marks the advent of the time when he shall be glorified. These things prove that the day of a new dispensation is now at length dawning. They must be taken as earnest of the great ingathering there shall be from all nations under heaven, but for the present as earnest only. I have laboured, and my disciples have laboured, but the time of harvest is not yet. The ground has been fully prepared, but the seed—the precious corn of wheat—is not yet even dropped into its furrow. It must be in the earth, and it must be dead there, before it can bring forth much fruit. It is in my case—I have told you more than once or twice—as it is in yours. If I love my life here—if I cherish it, that is, for the sake of the common objects of worldly existence—the whole purport of my coming to live here on earth will be neutralised; my life will have been thrown away, lost. I must act here as if I utterly disregarded or even hated it, or else I shall not accomplish my great work; and then, though my body shall be laid in the dust of death, out of my tomb shall spring the fruit of life everlasting. All nations shall call me blessed, and my name, instead of dying, shall endure for evermore. And you, my faithful disciples who serve me, you must also follow my course, and then you shall afterwards be with your Lord. If any man, Jew or Gentile, serve me, him will my Father honour. But my trouble, the great decisive conflict, is at hand. My human soul is overwhelmed. Shall I tell you what it says? “Father, save me from this hour!” Yet I know that for the very purpose of passing through this frightful conflict I came unto this hour. As the Son of man, then, I say now, “Father, glorify Thy Name; for to do Thy will, O Lord, am I come.” After speaking thus, Christ received a testimony from above, and went on to say that he had not needed this voice from heaven, like thunder, as a proof that his Father heard his prayers; rather had it been

given to confirm the faith of his disciples. That was now coming to pass which would be both a judgment of the world and a victory over the prince of the world, who would in due time be forced to yield full possession to the conqueror. ‘For though,’ said Christ, ‘I am going to be lifted up—and you know what I signify by that—yet by means of that very thing shall the great purpose of my coming be accomplished. By the painful cross I will draw all men unto me.’ But the people were scandalised at the idea of a Messiah lifted up to a shameful death. Christ did not see fit further to open the mystery of redemption at that time, but he warned them against the danger of rejecting the light which the Son of man had come to give them. He who himself was the light would in person be but a very little longer in their midst. Darkness might overtake them sooner than they expected. Let them believe whilst they had opportunity, that so they might be the children of light.

Here we find Christ speaking of approaching sufferings and death, of the glory that was to be his, and the power he was to receive through his death of attracting all men to himself. We see his human nature asserting its instinctive claim of self-protection, and shrieking from the shame and pain and the fight with the powers of darkness in prospect. But this natural feeling had to give way; it was conquered by the resolute determination of fulfilling the course marked out, and finishing the work assigned.

SECTION C.—*Christ’s Words on Finding No Fruit on a certain Fig-tree.*

(Matt. xxi. 18, 19; Mark xi. 12–14.)

We must suppose one of two things here—either an exhibition of captious anger in a moment of irritation and

disappointment, or some very good reason which led Christ to address these strange words to an inanimate object. The first hypothesis is utterly inconsistent with every other word or act we find recorded of him who, when exhausted with hunger, refused to turn stones into bread for the relief of his extreme need. We must suppose then that some impressive lesson was to be conveyed in what Christ said before this fruitless tree.* Perhaps he meant this:—A warning had been given to the Jewish nation before. Up to the time of that warning the nation was as a fruitless tree. But more should be done for it then. It was to have the benefit of instruction from Christ and his apostles, to witness miracles, and hear the words of life. The reprieve had now lasted a year, during which the dresser of the vineyard had laboriously watched and worked, and now the tree was again examined by the owner. Had it borne fruit? No! Then barren let it continue. Let no man eat of it thenceforth for ever. For this tree of God's planting must not be allowed to go on deceiving men by its show of leaves—external profession—without fruit. It must from that moment wither away.

We see here that Christ had no hesitation in uttering what had the semblance of a harsh and vindictive imprec-

* The meaning of the clause in Mark xi. 13, 'for the time of figs was not yet,' is not obvious. There are various explanations, rather inconsistent with each other. One, that, as it was early in the year, the tree was precocious in the matter of *leaves*, which, being observed at a distance, might lead a person to expect that proportionately early *fruit* would be found also on it. Another, that fruit might be expected, because, though not in season, it hangs on some fig-trees all the year round. Another, that though it was the season for figs to *be* on a tree, yet the recognised *time* for gathering not coming till the approaching passover, it was next to a certainty that figs would be found on a bearing tree. The great difficulty is the position of the word 'for,' but we may think less of this when we remember the equally peculiar way in which the writer of this gospel introduces this conjunction in another place. Mark xvi. 4.

tion, when he found that a worthy end might be attained by so doing. We see also what perfect confidence he had in his power over the course of nature.

SECTION CI.—*Christ's Words upon the Reluctance of some of the Rulers to Confess him, although they believed on him.*

(John xii. 42-50.)

Christ taught these lovers of the praise of men more than of the praise of God that they ought not to be ashamed of him unless they were ashamed of God Himself, for to believe in the one was to believe in the other. He was come a light into the world. His words were so important, and showed his true character so perfectly, that a man who heard them had no excuse. By them he that rejected Christ should be judged at the last day. The Father Himself commanded him to speak those words, in order that men through them might receive the offer of eternal life.

We have here renewed assertions from Christ of his union with the Father, and his claims of prescience as to what should be done at the last day.

SECTION CII.—*The Second Visit to the Fig-tree, and Instructions to the Disciples thereupon.*

(Matt. xxi. 20-22; Mark xi. 19-26.)

When the disciples had expressed astonishment at the effect on the tree of Christ's words, he took occasion to show a reason besides the one already considered for the performance of this strange miracle. It gave an opportunity for instructing the disciples on the importance and efficacy of strong and genuine faith. 'Have the faith of God,' he said—that is, faith of excellent strength, and of

range most vast.* They had already performed wonderful works. At a future time they were to do things even greater than Christ himself had done. But for these things godlike faith would be required. Here was a fig-tree dried up. But these consequences of their acts and their proclamations of the kingdom would, comparatively with this transaction, be the casting of mountains into the midst of the sea. Having strong faith, and forgiving in their hearts all who had trespassed against them, they should receive from God whatsoever they should think proper to ask of Him in prayer.

Here we see Christ's power of causing an event to serve the purpose of teaching more things than one. We must note also the carefulness and completeness of his instructions. He did not think it enough to tell the disciples that they must have faith when they prayed; he taught them that they must have forgiveness in their hearts also, or they would not be heard. We see also how he claims authority to declare the will of God.

SECTION CIII.—*Christ's Answer to the Priests and Scribes and Elders in the Temple, on being questioned as to his Authority. His Question to them; and the Parable of the Two Sons.*

(Matt. xxi. 23-32; Mark xi. 27-33; Luke xx. 1-8.)

After Christ's public entry into Jerusalem, and his cleansing the house of God, he walked about teaching in the temple. The scribes and elders, naturally irritated at his assumption of command and interference with their own prerogative of teaching, considered that the best way

* It is not 'faith in God:' that is a mistranslation. The 'faith of God' is an expression similar to the 'mountains of God,' 'the hailstones of God,' &c., equivalent to 'exceeding great mountains,' 'exceeding great hailstones,' &c.

to put a stop to this offence would be to show the people that Christ was wholly unauthorised as a teacher or a regulator of temple worship; and as they were certain that no civil, military, or ecclesiastical power had employed or recognised him in any way as such, there did seem a fair prospect of confusing him by their question, ‘By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?’ But this plan, apparently so well conceived, was made to turn to their own confusion, for they were not honest and straightforward themselves. Christ immediately engaged to answer their questions, if they would but tell him whether the baptism of John were from heaven or of men. After anxious consultation they were forced to make the disgraceful acknowledgment that they could not tell; they could neither say ‘From heaven,’ nor ‘Of men.’ Reasons of their own, with which the love of truth had nothing to do, prevented their committing themselves to either alternative. Christ therefore declined giving an answer to the men who thus had shown that they themselves were utterly incompetent to teach Israel. They were wholly unjustified therefore in interfering with one who had given so many proofs of ability to interpret the prophecies of Scripture. And he rebuked them before the people by the parable of the two sons, the first of whom promised to do the will of his father, but did it not; and the second roughly declined to go and work in the vineyard, but afterwards repented and went. And Christ showed from this that despised publicans and wretched harlots who repented at the preaching of John were really in a better way, and more fit for God’s work and kingdom, than unbelieving scribes and priests and elders, however dignified their office and conspicuous their show of piety.

Here we see again the astonishing readiness of Christ for every emergency. Without the most extraordinary

wisdom and the deepest study of events, and of the characters of men, he could not have been qualified to discomfit his subtle adversaries in this encounter. It is difficult to conceive of anything more damaging than the admission he forced them to make. The parable he then delivered, and its unambiguous application, showed the courage of one who feared not to tell the truth, though it would drive his powerful enemies to exasperation.

SECTION CIV.—*Parables of the Unfaithful Husbandmen, and the Marriage Feast.*

(Matt. xxi. 33-46; and xxii. 1-14; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-19.)

In continuation of his rebukes, Christ then pronounced the parable of the householder who owned an estate, and planted a vineyard therein. He spared no expense of money and trouble in providing all things requisite for its culture, and the security and due utilisation of the produce. Then he let it out, and left it in the hands of husbandmen, who were to work it for his account whilst he was absent in a distant country. We know how these men are said to have treated the servants sent from time to time to claim those profits that belonged to the owner, and how, proceeding from one crime to another, they became so hardened at last as to kill his well-beloved and only son, whom they might have been expected to reverence. Christ then called on his questioners to pass sentence on those wicked husbandmen. He agreed with their judgment as a righteous one, and then told them plainly that the kingdom of God should be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. They now rejected him; but they should remember the Scripture which said, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.' They had pronounced their own fate in devoting the wicked husband-

men to a miserable destruction. For the stone at which they stumbled would grind to powder those on whom it should fall. When Christ had thus spoken, the priests and scribes found no room to doubt that they were specially pointed at in these striking illustrations; but they received a further warning in the parable of the feast prepared by a king on occasion of the marriage of his son, to which those who had been formally bidden refused to come, and departed instead to their ordinary occupations and amusements. And certain of them, not content with thus insolently and undutifully treating their king, went so far as to lay hands on his messengers and to beat and even to kill some of them. But the king avenged his servants and destroyed those murderers and burnt up their city; and the wedding was furnished with guests, not in the persons of those who might have been expected there, but of people quite unused to royal feasts, wayfarers and others, both bad and good, found by the exertions of the king's servants; for he was determined that his feast should be eaten. It might have been supposed that all who were brought thus into the royal presence would have shown their respect by putting on the suitable garment provided for every guest. But it was not so. A person was found with the presumption to seat himself in the foul and miserable clothes that he had been wearing in the lanes outside. He had no excuse to offer for this insult, and the king resented it by ordering the foolish man to be taken away, fettered and manacled, from the brilliant scene and sumptuous feast, and thrust out into the cold and dismal night, where those who were excluded were now gnashing their teeth for envy and disappointment. For though many had had the opportunity of joining the royal festivities, but few had taken the least trouble to prepare themselves as guests whose presence the king would choose to delight in. As a body, the

priests and elders refused outright. They would not go in at all. And of classes more willing to accept the invitation, some would take offence at the necessity of parting with their old habits, of submitting to be cleansed from every defilement of the flesh and spirit, and of being invested with the robes of purity and grace.*

In the former of the two parables here noticed we find that Christ described himself as the one well-beloved Son of God, whose rejection and death should be followed by the miserable punishment of those who cast him out and slew him. We next see how he applied to himself a remarkable passage in the Psalms, allowed by many Jewish rabbis to be a prophecy of the Messiah. But the stone prefiguring him is not left in the state of honoured rest assigned it by the Psalmist. It becomes the stone of stumbling of Isaiah, against which many should fall—the stone of Daniel cut out without hands, smiting whatever opposes its way, and breaking in pieces, small as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, whatever it falls upon. In the latter parable Christ maintains the position of the Son, whilst he invests himself with the honours of the royal bridegroom.

SECTION CV.—*Christ Answers various Questions put by Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees; and himself propounds a Question to the Pharisees.*

(Matt. xxii. 15-46; Mark xii. 13-37; Luke xx. 20-26.)

Matthew and Mark tell us that the Pharisees and Herodians, Luke says that the chief priests and scribes, then

* It is difficult, however, to understand the connection of the last verse of the section, 'For many are called, but few are chosen,' with the rest of the parable, for only one man out of the multitude of guests is spoken of as turned out. May it not be that Christ was referring to the Jews then around him? that, though he invited them all, but few of *them* were chosen?

caused the question about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar to be put to Christ. It is possible that several classes combined to tempt Christ by a question which it seemed to them impossible he could answer without either committing himself against the Roman Government or irritating the feelings of the people. On the other hand, if he admitted his inability to decide the point, he would lose his character for courage and wisdom. We know how Christ frustrated their plot by making the tribute money, the *denarius* stamped with the image of Cæsar, speak for itself; and how he then delivered a precept good, not only for that occasion, but for all time, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' One set of questions was thus effectually disposed of to the admiration of the bystanders. But some of the Sadducees then came forward and stated what they thought an unanswerable case against the doctrine of the resurrection. How could that doctrine be consistent with the law of Moses, which Christ had so unequivocally said should be fulfilled? According to Moses, a widow might very possibly have to marry six of her deceased husband's brothers in succession. But as one woman could not have seven men acting as husbands at the same time in the world to come, how was her right husband to be fixed upon at the resurrection, all seven having an equal claim to her? Christ showed them that he could argue from words of Scripture quite as readily as any of the Jewish rabbis or doctors. From passages in the very books from which their objections had been taken, he answered them according to their Jewish methods of reasoning, and shut their mouths with arguments they could say nothing against; and not without leaving us another saying good as long as the world lasts, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.' The Sadducees having been thus silenced,

and in a way that some of the scribes thoroughly appreciated, the Pharisees, after some consultation among themselves, thought fit to make use of a scribe, learned in the law, for the purpose of making another effort to perplex Christ. At their instigation, this man, with no dishonesty on his own part, demanded of the new teacher which was the great, the first, commandment of the law. With none of the hesitation expected by the Pharisees, Christ not only gave a direct reply to this, but took the matter further than their question did. His answer, like the two former ones in this section, is as good for us as it was for them. Love to God is the first commandment, love to our neighbours the next. On these two things hang all the law and the prophets. The scribe, having received Christ's words in an honest and good heart, made an admirable comment on them, and was encouraged by the assurance that he was not far from the kingdom of God. Up to this time, chief priests, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, scribes, had attacked Christ with tempting questions. He had completely repulsed them all. None dared to renew the assault. He then put them to utter confusion by no longer standing on the defensive. He made them admit that Christ was David's son, and then asked if they would tell him how in that case David could call him Lord.* How could David's descendant be David's Lord? The Pharisees were utterly unable to answer, and their discomfiture was complete.

Again we must be struck with the wonderful and ready power of Christ in disposing of the questions put to him

* I am aware of the fact that this passage is interpreted by some as if it contained a rebuke of the Jewish notion that the Messiah should be the son of David—as though in fact Christ had said, 'How can this be the case, when David himself calls him his Lord? The idea is preposterous.' But it seems to me that the whole tenour of Christ's claims shows that the ordinary interpretation is the correct one here.

with the greatest subtlety by men of widely different opinions among his adversaries, who made common cause in trying to embarrass him. Each set flattered itself by turns with being able now to disgrace him before the people. Christ's answers were to him an easy triumph over them all. But they were more. They contained things which will serve for the instruction and comfort of Christians whilst the world lasts. And then in the question which Christ at length propounded to his opponents he proved himself immeasurably superior to the Pharisees, even in the mode of attack they had chosen to adopt. And, further, as he had already accepted the title of 'Christ,' he did in effect not only put in a claim to the kingdom as David's son, but asserted his own lordship over David and every one else, till all enemies should be made his footstool.

SECTION CVI.—*Denunciation of the Pharisees and Scribes.*

(Matt. xxiii. 1-39; Mark xii. 38-40; Luke xx. 45-47.)

Having not only answered the Pharisees, but put a question to them which they found it impossible to reply to, Christ judged it necessary to explain to the people their proper position with respect to the authorised instructors of the nation. He told them to obey the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees in as far as it inculcated the precepts of the law, for undoubtedly they sat in Moses' seat whilst the Jewish dispensation yet lasted. But he cautioned the multitudes and his disciples against following the example of these imperious, exacting, and ostentatious men, who said what was good and did it not. In comparison with himself, the Master Teacher, scribes, Pharisees, and people were all on much the same level, massed together in natural ignorance of the knowledge he had come to impart. And it would in due time appear

that not the man of ostentation and pride should be the greatest, but he that should be humble in his own eyes, he who should be the most ready to serve his neighbour in love. Christ then proceeded to declaim against the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, exposing the oppression and wickedness and the futility of their fine-drawn scrupulosities. He reproached them in terms of the severest indignation imaginable, till at length he as it were gathered together in one great reservoir of vengeance all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel which cried to God from the ground, to the blood of Zacharias who was stoned in the court of the House of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord look upon it and require it.' He let loose this awful flood to overwhelm the guilty host, even as the waters of the Red Sea piled up in a heap had once been let fall on other taskmasters and oppressors of Israel. Upon that generation all these things should come. Jerusalem, that had killed the prophets, Jerusalem, that had stoned the men of God sent to protest against its wickedness, should now fill the measure of its iniquities. Yet, though it had earned the title of the city of blood, it had once been the city of God, the habitation of the great King; and, 'How often,' exclaimed Christ, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! But, alas! now your day is over, your house, that once was filled with the glory of the Lord, shall soon be left unto you desolate. He who would have been your mighty Guardian has been rejected; and no further deliverance will be vouchsafed for you by the Son of man till your hearts shall be turned to him after your calamities, and you shall be prepared to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"'

Here we find Christ pouring forth denunciations of severity perfectly astounding. His indignation boils up with violence before the intensity of his anger. ‘Hypocrites, shutters-up of heaven, devourers of widows’ houses, makers of long prayers for a pretence, recipients of especial damnation, children of hell, blind guides, strainers away of gnats and swallowers of camels, fools, upholders of outside decency and of inward extortion and excess, men no better than whited sepulchres, full of all uncleanness, serpents, generation of vipers, children of them which killed the prophets, full of iniquity, where is the convicted malefactor more fit than you for the flames of Gehenna?’ Thus spake Christ; and did Athenian orator ever pour forth such a torrent of opprobrium against the enemy of his people? How intrepid the lowly man who could thus denounce the powerful to their faces! How awful that presence must have been which could restrain them from instantly turning upon him and tearing him to pieces! And must we not understand that when Christ charged that generation with all the righteous blood ever shed, he meant that his own blood was of more account than that of all the prophets since the world began? that the deeds of all the murderers of the prophets together should be exceeded in malignity and import by the act of the generation that should put him to death? We must also notice Christ’s prediction of a better state of things at some future time, when his return would at length be welcomed by a repenting and expectant nation.

SECTION CVII.—*The Widow’s Two Mites.*

(Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4.)

A poor widow having dropped into the treasury of God two of the minutest pieces of money that were in use among the Jews, Christ told his disciples that she had

cast in more than all the rich who had just contributed, though they had cast in much. For hers was a genuine sacrifice.* Small as the value was of her two little brass coins, she would feel the want of them, for she had no more left. But the large gifts of the rich cost them comparatively nothing, and showed no self-denial like hers, for they had abundance left for the support of life, and for indulgence in luxury too.

We have here an instance, not only of Christ's appreciation of a lowly act of self-denial, but also of his readiness in turning to good account every opportunity of qualifying his disciples for their future office. What was done by the poor widow would have been thought beneath the observation of those around her, but Christ seized the occasion of showing what it was that rendered a gift acceptable to God. How ready the stores of wisdom and knowledge laid up in him always were for the enrichment of the minds of his sincere followers!

SECTION CVIII.—*Reply to Questions of the Disciples put from the Mount of Olives over against the Temple.*

(Matt. xxiv. 1-51; Mark xiii. 1-37; Luke xxi. 5-38.)

The most contradictory opinions have been formed as to what Christ described and predicted in the discourse delivered in reply to the questions urgently put by some of his disciples as he sat upon the Mount of Olives in view of the stately buildings of the temple. Stones of magnificent size and finished workmanship adorned it; and there seemed no reason why it should not be as lasting as the hill on which it was built. But Christ had just said that not one stone should be left upon another that should not

* We do not know all the circumstances of the case. It would not be right or just for a widow amongst us to give away everything. And Christ does not say that the act was prudent, but that the gift was great.

be cast down. So far all is clear. But there are expressions in the discourse that followed which have led to much discussion. Christ certainly spoke of the coming of the Son of man. But what did that mean? The destruction of Jerusalem? the end of the Jewish polity or dispensation? the future judgment of all men? or the end of the world? All these opinions have their advocates. Perhaps the most sensible thing for us to do will be to look back at the question which the discourse was intended to answer. According to Matthew, Christ was asked, ‘Tell us, when shall these things (the throwing down of the stones of the temple and its reduction to a heap of ruins) be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?’ According to Mark, the question was, ‘Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?’ And according to Luke, they asked him, ‘Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?’ Now, the last form of the question seems explicit enough, and would lead us to conclude that Christ’s answer could refer only to the destruction of Jerusalem. But the question in Matthew appears to go farther than that. Perhaps it is only fair to suppose that the disciples had very confused ideas at the time, and mixed several things together which we are in the habit of considering as very distinct the one from the other. Probably to men in the position of Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the destruction of the temple and the holy city, and the complete overthrow of the nation of Israel, would be looked forward to as the end of the world, or—as more properly translated, perhaps—‘the completion of the age.’* And it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Christ’s answer was framed so as to be applicable to

* *συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος*. Why should this necessarily mean the destruction of the world?

all the ideas pervading the disciples' question, confused notions though they were of men who hardly knew what they were talking about. It may be that Christ perceived that their state then was one not capable of bearing a clear communication of the things decreed by the Father, although it was of great importance that some instruction with reference to such things should be indelibly impressed on their minds for their future guidance and comfort. Many things might thus be blended in imperceptible lines of union. How indeed could we expect that any predictions very explicit would be at that time communicated by one who scrupled not to declare that 'of that day and that hour knew no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father?'

Reasons have been offered above to show why we should not wonder that minute details of circumstances and time are not to be found throughout Christ's discourse under consideration now. Few, it should be remembered, are the prophecies that are clear before fulfilment. But we see there are some things here of which Christ does speak very clearly. We must, for instance, note the certainty with which he foretold the destruction of the strong edifice which was then receiving elaborate completion. Notwithstanding its apparent impregnability and the valour of the Jews, devoted to infatuation in their attachment to their temple, not one stone of it should be left on another. We see the claim he makes of personal ability to endow his disciples with an utterance of irresistible wisdom. And this is the more remarkable because he had told them before that he should shortly be crucified, and also that 'the Holy Ghost,'* 'the Spirit of their Father,'† should teach them and speak in them. He thus claims a power equal to that of the Holy Ghost.

* Luke xii. 12.

† Matt. x. 20.

We must note also the boldness of his candour in faithfully telling his disciples of the troubles and persecutions they would have to suffer in remaining faithful to him. We see too the glory and power which he claims for the Son of man. He should come in the clouds of heaven and send his angels to perform his orders. And his remarkable prediction should not escape us that the Jewish race should not pass away till all these things should be fulfilled. Nor should we fail to note the importance that Christ attached to his own words. 'Heaven and earth,' said he, 'shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.' Yet, for all this, our attention must be given to the fact that he was truly a man, that his mind was human as well as his body, and that so far alone as it pleased the Father for the necessities of His work to reveal things to him, he had better means than any other man of his nation of obtaining knowledge.

SECTION CIX.—*Parables of the Ten Virgins and of the Talents.*

(Matt. xxv. 1-30.)

There is scarcely an English person of any education whatever who is not perfectly familiar with the words of these two parables. We are told in the first how a company of ten virgins, with lamps sufficiently well trimmed and burning brightly enough to entitle their bearers to a place in a very splendid marriage procession, went forth one night to meet the bridegroom, with the object of entering the house in his train, and then sharing the wedding festivities. All of them had lamps of the same kind, all used oil of the same quality. It so happened that they had to wait some time for the bridegroom. Nature in the depth of night seeks repose; so, although they knew the procession might come by at any moment,

they all dropped asleep. A sudden cry at length aroused them from their slumbers, and they had scarcely time to look to their lamps when the bridegroom came past. Then some of the virgins found to their horror that their lamps were useless, because they had only taken oil enough with them to feed the flame for a short time. In the hurry and confusion they could not procure more before the bridegroom had gone by, and before those virgins who had wisely brought some vessels with a supply of oil for replenishing their lamps in case of need had gone in with the bridegroom to the marriage-feast. The improvident virgins found that all their trouble had gone for nothing. For want of oil at the right moment, they had been unable to follow the bridegroom with their lights. They were not therefore recognised as having had a place in his retinue, and were forced to remain without in the dark night, whilst their former companions were joyfully feasting in the illuminated chambers of the newly-married pair.

Thus did Christ teach his disciples the necessity of being always prepared. 'I told you just now,' he said, 'that you cannot possibly know the time of the coming of the Son of man. Take good care then to be always in a state of readiness for him; for only so can you be safe against the dreadful disappointment of being shut out from the presence of his glory at last.' Christ then delivered the parable of the 'Talents,' very similar in some things to that of the '*Minæ*' already noticed. Yet there is an important difference in the details. In the one, for instance, the same small sum is entrusted to each of the servants; but here various sums, all of considerable value, are severally apportioned for employment, according to the ability of those who had to take them. Here, too, the good servants are congratulated and invited to participate in the joy of their lord. And we are taught

that, whatever we may think of the scantiness of our means or the greatness of our disadvantages, each one of us is really intrusted with talents according to his own ability of making good use of them; and that whoever fails to employ them profitably will not only be disentitled to admission to the mansions of the blessed and to posts of honourable distinction hereafter, but will find himself positively turned away into the darkness without, to spend a night of self-upbraiding and mortification.

We cannot help noticing again Christ's wonderful powers of conveying instruction. In language simple as it was impressive, and by figures not likely to be forgotten, he here taught certain truths concerning the kingdom of heaven. The former of the two parables of this section proves his ability to put forth an entirely fresh illustration whenever he chose. The latter shows how easy he found it to vary the details of one already given when occasion required. But I cannot dismiss the parable of 'the Virgins' without pointing to a prophetic touch of truth in it—truth patent to all Christendom to the present day. It will be admitted that the 'bridegroom' is the Son of man. It is equally evident, then, that the virgins with lamps represent those who should profess his name during his bodily absence from this world—in other words, the members of his Church on earth. And I wish to call attention to the fact that in the parable all these are stated, all, without exception, to have slumbered and slept whilst the momentarily-expected bridegroom tarried. Now it is undeniably an article of belief with Christians (I speak of them as a body) that their Master will come again. It is a matter of past history and present observation that his immediate coming has often been thought at hand, always considered possible, and that the time when it will actually be is quite uncertain to this day,

some of the best Christians since their Lord's departure from earth having made the greatest mistakes about it. Still, however that may be, there are many thousands, I might say millions, of Christians now existing who feel as sure as they do of anything that the narrator of this parable will come again at some period (whether distant or within the next few days), of which the only thing certain is its suddenness. And yet, with few exceptions, which the parable leaves out as hardly noticeable, they all attend to the concerns of religion and the ordinary affairs of this life just as if Christ's coming were an impossibility. I do not think this is too strong an expression to use; but if it be, I may say it is undeniable that they act not at all like men awake to the possibility of Christ's coming in their time. Can we even say they show signs of being awake to what they would admit as an inevitable certainty, that if Christ come not whilst they are in the body they must be called away at some time to meet him, and that the summons for them to do so may be put in force at any moment? My object demands no expression of opinion whether or not in the constitution of things it is a necessity of the case that Christians should thus close their eyes. We know at least that the preparations of half the number of virgins had been so wisely made as to serve them in good stead at the supreme moment. The lamps feebly grasped during their slumber had begun to flicker, but they had sufficient oil in readiness for the revival of the almost expiring flame when the sudden shout aroused them, making known the bridegroom's approach. It would have been enough for the conduct of the parable—indeed, some people might have thought it better—if the foolish virgins only had been represented as falling asleep. But the prescience of the narrator foreshadowed what we still find strictly true—that the wise have their time of slumber as well.

SECTION CX.—*The Coming of Christ to Sit in Judgment on the Nations.*

(Matt. xxv. 31–46.)

Whoever remembers that all the words in this chapter were spoken in direct continuation of the discourse detailed in the preceding one, must admit, I think, that Christ's reply to the questions of the disciples embraced the recognition of matters stretching much further into futurity than the destruction of Jerusalem. In the two parables just glanced at, he had spoken of his own waiting servants and friends. He had told how their works of faith, and labours of love, and patience of preparation would be rewarded, at his coming, by their final participation in the joy of their lord, and their entry to the marriage supper with the bridegroom himself; and he had described the one evil man and the five foolish virgins who should miss those things. But in either case these were of his servants, or of the company that professed to do him honour. So far, then, for what we call the Church. But now, in the sublime passage before us, Christ tells how he will come in glorious state to judge the nations; not this time as the bridegroom, not as the master of a well-selected household, but as a sovereign lord, even as the King of all the earth. Sitting thus on the throne of his glory, he would survey those whom his irresistible summons had gathered before him, and would marshal them in ranks according to his unerring insight reviewing their previous course. Up to that instant it would seem that the nations before his tribunal had not known him. Astonished, then, were those among them who had given meat to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, who had sheltered the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and personally comforted the prisoner, to hear that they

had in effect done all this to the King, who from his glorious judgment-seat would now invite them as the blessed of his Father to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Equally astounded were the unmerciful and hard-hearted amongst them—those who had refused to devote time or property to the relief of the distressed—at hearing that the neglected, needy, and afflicted were brethren of the great King, and that in declining to relieve them they had in effect turned him from their doors. Therefore were these accursed, and ordered to depart into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And so they went away to eternal punishment, whilst the righteous went into life eternal.

If the interpretation above given be correct, we have here Christ claiming the heathen* for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. But I do not know why we should feel bound to understand this prophecy before its fulfilment, any more than we are obliged to indicate the precise gradations from one obscurely shadowed period to another that underlie the predictions in the preceding chapter of Matthew. But whatever this gathering of all the nations may mean, whatever the kingdom to which the righteous among them are called (a kingdom administered, as some other Scriptures seem to indicate, by the saints), whatever the nature of the punishment to which the unmerciful among them are to be relegated, one thing is certain, that Christ here speaks of himself as ‘the King,’ high above all nations, the Judge of the earth, from whose sentence there is no appeal. We must also notice the condescension of the Son of man in identifying himself with the least of his brethren.

* *τὰ ἔθνη*, v. 32, almost invariably translated ‘the heathen’ in the New Testament.

SECTION CXI.—*The Preparation to Eat the Passover with the Disciples.*

(Matt. xxvi. 14-20; Mark xiv. 12-17; Luke xxii. 1-18.)

Now Christ's public instructions had all been delivered. No warning, no invitation more, was Jerusalem to have. Christ felt that his time was come. But presentiment it could not be called. It was a certainty with him that the paschal season should not come round again till the Son of man should have been given into the hands of sinners. He was ready for what was to follow. But his mind was full; as every man's must be when he certainly knows he is going to do or to suffer some great thing. And so Christ, yearning for friendly sympathy, spoke of what was engrossing his thoughts at the moment, reminding the disciples that after two days was the feast, and telling them that simultaneously with it the Son of man should be betrayed to be crucified. It is not within the scope of our plan to examine the steps taken by priests and scribes and elders and the wretched Judas. We have only to do with Christ's words; and the next that appear in the New Testament narrative, after his communication just noticed, were addressed to Peter and John, with orders to prepare the Passover, and directions for finding the man who would provide the twelve and their Lord with an apartment suitable for what was to be done. In this guest-chamber, a large upper room furnished and prepared, Christ was at length seated with his disciples, and again he spoke of that which was uppermost in his mind. 'With desire,' he said, 'I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I shall never be present at another, but the wickedness of man has not been permitted to remove me from earth before I could thus gather together my beloved friends as a father collects his own family and

presides at this solemn feast. Divide now among yourselves the cup of which I have just with thanksgiving partaken. Before the fruit of the vine can be prepared for the next Passover I shall have departed from this world. The kingdom of God—a dispensation which will not consist of ordinances of Mosaic authority—shall by that time have had its foundation laid; and this Passover, divinely sanctioned and long-established as it is, shall be virtually superseded by a rite of my own ordaining.’

The three things I principally note here are—the yearning Christ felt for human sympathy when his mind was full of the thought that his passion was close at hand; the attention nevertheless shown towards his faithful disciples; and the certainty that what he was about to suffer and do would be effectual for the establishment of the kingdom of God.

SECTION CXII.—*Christ Corrects the Ambition of the Disciples, Washes their Feet, and Designates Judas as the Traitor.*

(Matt. xxvi. 21-25; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxii. 21-30;
John xiii. 1-30.)

Thus commenced this paschal supper.* And now the disciples, more ready to think of the near approach of the kingdom and of the so lately foretold coming of the King in glory than of the painful passages first to be gone through, set their imaginations to work, not without selfish dispute, in allotting to themselves what they thought would be the highest posts in the court of the great King. Their ever-watchful master turned this occasion to account in giving to all his followers that great

* I think this term may be used whether the Passover was actually kept on that particular day or not. My purpose does not require a solution of that difficult question.

lesson of unselfish humility and personal kindness recorded by the apostle John; who tells us how Christ, rising from his couch and divesting himself of his robe of honour, the seamless coat, condescended to appear before the twelve as a menial servant with all the preparations necessary for washing their feet. We read that he really did perform this act of personal service to each of his disciples, and that when Peter very naturally remonstrated as his turn came, Christ said, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;' and that when that ardently-loving man then put forth the unreasonable demand, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,' Christ replied, 'He that hath bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all'—as much as to say, 'One of you has never properly cleansed himself at all; and therefore the external washing of his feet, although by my own hands, will do him no good whatever. But his is a solitary case among you. You others, faithful believers in me, though doubtless overpowered at times by the suddenness of temptation, are not to think that a thorough or a totally new cleansing is every moment required. A Christian man is not to be perpetually complaining of his filthiness, as though God had done nothing yet for his purification. Once bathed in the fountain provided for sin and uncleanness, saved by the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, he is in effect clean, and fit to take his place at the heavenly feast. True, he must walk thither on polluted ground, and his feet must needs become somewhat soiled in the way. But beyond that he is clean every whit. Let your feet then be washed before you recline at the table of him who bids you to the royal banquet, and you will be received as perfectly acceptable guests.' Having given this practical illustration of humility, and evolved therefrom an incidental lesson of

great importance, Christ, now again in his robes, taught with his wonted authority. He said that his disciples ought to do to each other as he, their Lord and master, had done to them—that they who had learnt of him should act somewhat better than unenlightened Gentiles amongst whom unscrupulous tyrants were flattered with the title of benefactors and names of honour wholly undeserved. The coming kingdom was to be conducted on different principles. There, he who best served those around him should be first. They could not possibly humble themselves so deeply as he had, but they might strive to emulate his example of kind unselfish service to the brethren. The disciple who the most nearly followed his lord in this respect should be the chief. And the attainment of post and honour in his kingdom would be worth their utmost efforts. Notwithstanding all their failings, they had been in the main constant to him during his temptations, and he would now ratify the promise made before, that they should eat and drink at his table and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But this general promise had, alas! its exception. Well he knew that one of those now eating with him would lift up his hand against him. There was base treachery amongst those who had been the objects of his most condescending kindness. And he mentioned these things beforehand that their faith might not be shaken when they should see his sufferings. Having spoken to this effect, and knowing that Judas was now ready, the master of the feast could no longer refrain from exclaiming that the hand of a traitor was with him at the table. Eagerly then the disciples enquired among themselves who the man could be. Pressed by their importunities, Christ made the required indication to the disciple lying on his breast at supper by giving the sop to Judas Iscariot. So doing, he said, ‘The Son of man now goeth, as it is written

of him. There will be no passing through the midst of his enemies and so escaping now. Yet woe to that man by whom he is betrayed! Neither the determination of God nor my readiness for sacrifice will lessen his frightful responsibility or relieve the blackness of his guilt in the least degree.' Judas, however, now in unchecked career down the road to destruction, and hardened by the powers of evil, had the effrontery to say, 'Master, is it I?' Christ, by a sign understood by the traitor, answered, 'Yes;' and added aloud, 'What thou doest, do quickly.'

In the words to Peter there is a remarkable combination of those things which distinguish the sayings of Christ. We find condescension, firmness, authority, and affection, high wisdom also in repressing the extravagance of enthusiasm. We must be impressed too with his resolution. Notwithstanding the perturbation of his human feelings, there remained the firmness of his resolve to go through his appointed sufferings, without flinching, to the end. We must notice also his penetration through the designs of Judas, his foreknowledge of what was coming, and his confident certainty of ultimate glory and power.

SECTION CXIII.—*Exhortation to the Eleven Disciples, and Forewarning of Peter's Denial.*

(Luke xxii. 31-34; John xiii. 31-38.)

Christ, relieved of the traitor's presence, talked in unreservedly affectionate language to the faithful ones left around his table. He spoke of his glory as perfectly certain, and now almost immediately to begin. As a father about to leave his 'little children' for a place to which they could not accompany him, he exhorted them in terms of endearment to love one another during his absence, as

he had loved them. To Peter, who anxiously asked whither he was going, he said, 'Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' The zealous disciple enquired why he could not follow then, and said he would lay down his life for his master's sake. Christ contradicted him not; but solemnly warned him of the fearful assault of which he was soon to be the object; and, to prevent the despair that might otherwise follow the fall, he said that, through his intercession, faith would not be permanently extinguished; that recovery should take place, and that the experience so painfully gained was to be applied for the strengthening of the repentant apostle's brethren.

We see throughout the passage not only strongly-marked affection, but the entire absence of what we should call 'littleness' in Christ's character. He was talking to twelve men who in this solemn crisis of their master's history had been occupied among themselves, not in responding to his call for sympathy, but in wrangling about precedence one with another. But Christ reproached them not because they failed to appreciate his supremely awful position and infinitely important designs. Enough for him that they were attached friends, faithful and obedient disciples. So he overlooked their failures and rudenesses, and treated them as a loving parent treats his little ones who only behave with impropriety because they know no better. With one of them his forbearance was not confined to this. For Peter afterwards, in as far as words could go, threw over his Lord altogether; and yet not one expression of resentment for his disciples' injurious treatment fell from Christ. But he did speak words which must have brought a ray of hope before the eyes of Peter, even when they were filled with tears of bitter remorse. We see too the foreknowledge

possessed by Christ of that which seemed most unlikely to happen; and also the efficacy that he attributed to his own intercession with the Father.

SECTION CXIV.—*The Institution of the Eucharist.*

(Matt. xxvi. 26–30; Mark xiv. 22–26; Luke xxii. 19, 20.)

Putting together the accounts in the three synoptical gospels, we find Christ's words in giving the bread thus reported, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.' And in giving the cup, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Covenant' (or, 'this cup is the New Covenant in my blood') 'which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.' He then probably repeated what he had said before, 'Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.' We must try to understand Christ here, or else the words he used on this solemn and most important occasion will not serve our immediate purpose of gathering indications of his character and nature.

Some time before, Christ had used words which astounded friends and foes alike. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life.' The disciples found these words mysterious. 'This is a hard saying,' they said; 'who can hear it?' And at that time it undoubtedly was a hard saying; for the objects and the purposes of the incarnation, unfolded afterwards, had not reached fulfilment, and were known on earth only to him who propounded this mystery. But now, at this last meal with the disciples, the end was so near as to be, in Christ's view, as good as accomplished. He had told them the

Son of man was already glorified, and in that sense he now speaks. 'Without the incarnation of the Son of God,' he seems to say, 'no perfect sacrifice could have been offered—no life eternal could have been had for man. And you must realise this great truth. Therefore I have declared that you must eat the flesh of the Son of man. Now, in eating this—this bread of which I here call on my disciples in union together to partake of—you eat no Jewish sacrifice, but you eat my flesh which is given for you, my body so soon now to be broken on the cross. I have said too that you must drink the blood of the Son of man. I now tell you that you have no need henceforth to sprinkle the blood of the Passover, or to shed the blood of bulls and goats; but I say that in this cup which here I give you, this cup of which you must all drink, you have my blood, the blood of the New Covenant, without which there could be no remission of sins. After my departure I enjoin you, and all belonging to my church, as joint members of one body, to meet together thus in remembrance of me; and to show forth in the face of all men how that I, once for all, yielded up life before God—life inherent in myself, which no man could take from me. And in observing this my ordinance, believers in me, in communion together, shall be blessed in all the benefits springing from the incarnation of the Son of God. They will by faith receive the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man. They shall be strengthened and edified with heavenly food, they shall drink of the streams of eternal life.'

I have given what I conceive to be the import of Christ's words here. If they indicated any mystery, I am not bound to explain it. Those who would reduce them to the level of man's ordinary apprehension should remember that the most noted leader of the early church, one generally accounted an inspired apostle, spoke of the Lord's

Supper as ‘the communion of the body of Christ—the communion of the blood of Christ;’ and that he warned men of the awful consequences of meddling therewith without proper motive, and of judgments that would be inflicted on those partakers who discerned not ‘the Lord’s body.’

We have here a surprising declaration made by a certain individual. Whilst handling the two simple elements of an ordinary meal, he engaged that in partaking of them in accordance with his own institution and ordinance, in remembrance of him, his faithful disciples should share together inconceivable blessings resulting from his incarnation; for less than this could not be meant by feeding on his body and drinking his blood. What confidence this in himself!—in the transcendent worth of his own nature and importance of his own work! What reliance on the power of his spirit over men! And can any one deny that this confidence was justified? Up to this our time, at least, though he instituted no gorgeous ceremonial* this ordinance has been strictly observed. Already has it lasted for a longer period than that wherein were duly celebrated the Pass-over and other things belonging to the splendid ministra-

* The ‘Lord’s Supper’ cannot possibly be administered now without some kind of ceremonial. Something beyond what was barely ordained, decency and order require even in a Nonconformist chapel of the severest type. Ceremonial may be excessive or deficient, according to the judgment of different churches (of course I mean branches of the church) or of different individuals in the same church. The accident of its being more gorgeous than it need, cannot hinder the communicant from receiving the benefit intended by Christ. Nor of itself, can a more meagre ceremonial prevent his receiving the body and blood of Christ. There is no reason why the partaker who is actuated by worthy motives, should not find what he looks for, even though he whose office it is to administer the sacrament to him should grievously mistake, in one sense or the other, the import of the words attributed to Christ in this institution.

tions of the Mosaic priesthood which it superseded. Though Christians may not all agree in the precise import of the words of the institution, it is evident that they do to this day meet together to show their Lord's death—that they believe they do thus partake of the benefits intended by Christ; that numbers of them are persuaded that in so doing they receive the very body and blood of Christ. And what reason is there to imagine that for the ages still future, partakers, when worthily receiving, shall cease to find a certain energetic, though uncomprehended principle imparted to them, stimulating their devotedness to God and love to the brethren?

SECTION CXV.—*Christ's Discourse with his Disciples after the Institution of the 'Lord's Supper.'*

(Luke xxii. 35-38; John xiv. 1-31; xv. 1-27; xvi. 1-33.)

Christ now advertises his apostles that after his departure their lives, in all but a few exceptional cases, would be exposed to casualties and injuries equally with other men's. They would have to use the means of defence which property, law, or the possession of arms might place within their reach. When he had sent them through the land two and two, a special providence had accompanied them, and everything they could possibly require had been guaranteed. They admitted that they had lack of nothing, though they had taken no money, no store of provisions, no protection against the roughnesses of the way. But now all this was to be changed. He whom the people had wished to salute as their king was now about to be executed as a malefactor, and his adherents would share his reproach and would be persecuted by all classes. But when his disciples showed that they were partly armed, he intimated that weapons were not required for the moment, his servants were not to fight whilst he was

with them; he would provide for their safety during his own sufferings. But afterwards they should have much to contend with. ‘Yet, notwithstanding all this and other things that must weigh heavily on your minds,’ added Christ, ‘let not your heart be troubled, maintain your faith in God, maintain your faith in me. It may seem difficult to do this when left to yourselves in the midst of foes, but it shall not be impossible; for you will remember that my absence from among you is for the advancement of your own interests. I am going to my Father’s, where there is abundant room for you all. I am going to prepare a place for you in His happy and glorious dwelling; and there, in mansions of peace, you shall abide for ever. And as certainly as I go I will come again and receive you to myself no more to part, for where I am, there shall you be also. And you ought to be at no loss to know where I am going, and the way thereto.’ But Thomas demurred to this. So Christ told them that when he spoke of going to the Father he meant that he could go in his own right, whilst they could only go through him as the way. He also was the truth and the life, the personification of these attributes of God. Therefore those who had known him had known—and, in a sense, had seen—the Father also. Further, in reply to an observation of Philip’s, Christ persistently declared his own union with the Father; and promised that through power which he would send down to them from the Father, the apostles should perform even greater works than he had himself shown on earth; they should have much greater success in their ministrations than he had met with. He then charged them to keep his commandments, and promised that when he should be gone another Comforter should come to take his place with them. Yet he would still manifest himself to those who loved him and kept his commandments. Jude asked him how it would be possible for him to show

himself to the disciples and not to the world at large. When he went about doing good he had been seen of all men; and when he should come again, was it not so to be? How could it be otherwise? 'Truly,' said Christ, 'the time shall come when every eye shall see me, but I am not now speaking of that. I am referring particularly to that manifestation of myself and of my Father whereby a man shall perceive in his inmost spirit that God and Christ are dwelling within him.' Christ then again promised the gift of the Comforter and declared that notwithstanding the conflicts that must necessarily accompany the establishment of his kingdom, he would leave peace, his own peace, with them as a parting bequest. The peace which he had enjoyed through all the persecutions of his adversaries should be theirs on his departure, as Elijah's mantle when he had ascended towards heaven became Elisha's. There would be little more opportunity for personal discourse together, for he was going to his Father's joyful presence, having first only one more attack to bear from the prince of this world, who was even then advancing to the assault. Christ knew there was nothing vulnerable in himself, no weak unguarded spot open; but as it was part of the cup he had to drink, he would suffer the attack to be made, and thus show the world his perfect submission to the Father. Resolutely, then, having taken his last meal on earth, knowing the shortness of the time left him, and aware that all that had been done and suffered till then was nothing compared with what was now coming, Christ said, 'Arise. I must linger here no longer. With none to help me, I go forth now to meet my frightful adversary. I go to stand with no man on my side in the dreadful encounter. But I may have the solace of your companionship at least to the borders of the valley of the shadow of death. So now let us go hence together.' Then, probably whilst preparations were being made for

departure, or perhaps during a short adjournment to the temple,* Christ out of the fulness of his heart continued his leave-taking, so loving and instructive. He had been giving them of the fruit of the vine. He now told his friends how he was the true vine of which his Father was the Planter and Cultivator. In every plant there might be unfruitful as well as fruitful branches; and the branches on this vine which bore no fruit would be pulled off and thrown away by its Dresser; who would, on the other hand render those that bore well more fruitful still by pruning. In the case of his immediate disciples, this cleansing process had been already in great measure accomplished through the instrumentality and power of Christ's word. But still they must remember the necessity of abiding in him—of maintaining communion with him—because as the branch, however good, will wither and become fit only for the fire if severed from the vine, so would they lose all vitality apart from him. It was for the honour of the Almighty Husbandman that they should bear much fruit. In doing so also they would show that they had worthily received Christ's instructions. And the fruit of their loving obedience would bring joy to him after his departure. In revealing these things to them, he was treating them with confidence, as a man acts not towards his slaves, but his friends. He reminded them that they could no more hope to escape persecution than he had on the part of those who knew him not. Such wilfully ignorant persons were not innocent, for they hated him without a cause. He affectionately noticed the sorrow that filled the disciples' hearts at the idea of his departure; although that departure was for their good, because the Comforter whom he would send should help them and bear witness of him. Through their words and deeds this

* It does not appear that Christ actually went forth to Gethsemane till after the offering up of the prayer recorded in John xvii.

Advocate and Teacher should reprove the world, convincing it first of its sin in rejecting Christ through unbelief; then of Christ's perfect righteousness, to which the Father would bear witness in receiving him to Himself; and lastly of the power committed to Christ for judgment; for the prince of this world should be judged. The gift of the Spirit would enable them to show the world what was sin; to direct the world to Christ for righteousness; and to warn the world of judgment to come. And that enlightening Spirit should qualify them to understand things which while Christ was with them they were not fit even to hear of. They should be comforted, too, by being enabled to see the true glory of their master for whom they had so sincere a love.

Christ added the consolatory assurance that although in a little time they should not see him with their bodily eyes, yet in a little time afterwards they should still discern his presence with them. But this was more than the disciples could understand. How, after Christ's departure to be with the Father, could they ever have his presence here again? Noticing their perplexity, Christ assured them that true happiness was in store for them, which could be compared only to the rapturous feelings of a woman after her anguish, when she remembers her pain no more for joy that a man was born into the world. He engaged to see them again. Till the time came they could not understand how. But it should be so, and then their joy should not again be disturbed. All the difficulties that had disquieted them should be so completely solved that they should have no more perplexing questions to ask. Then they might with confidence make known their requests to God, for Christ was going to present himself personally before his Father, who would look on them through him as His own adopted children, and would be ever ready to hear their filial supplications. The

Father would certainly love those who had loved His son and believed that he came from God. And as surely as he had come into the world from the Father, so surely was he now going to the Father again. Thus Christ replied* to their questionings, and his answer was so perfectly satisfactory to the disciples that it drew from them a fresh avowal of their belief in him. Christ then said, 'You are sure that at length you are believers—that nothing can now shake your confidence in me? You little know what is going to happen, and how soon you will be running from your master and sheltering yourselves in your homes to avoid the danger and reproach of being connected with him. You, so devoted now, will leave me alone with my enemies. And yet I shall not be alone, for my Father is always with me. These warnings are distasteful to you now; but they shall hereafter, equally with the words I have spoken of comfort and hope, turn to the establishment of your peace; for you shall remember when the tribulation comes which you certainly must go through in the world, that I told you about it. Be of good cheer. You shall not be really hurt. Nothing can be done to you without my permission, for I have overcome the world.'

* It is difficult to see how the words reported in John xvi. 20-28 could be taken as a sufficient answer to the simple question (stated in v. 17) put by the perplexed disciples to each other. Yet they are said to have expressed their perfect satisfaction with the reply. Though this may seem surprising to us, we should remember that Christ had then to deal with men very differently trained to ourselves. An answer which extremely pleased their Jewish minds might not necessarily suit people with our habits of thought. We were not the persons addressed. Perhaps the disciples' great satisfaction sprung from the proof Christ's words gave them, that they had a Master who perfectly knew their thoughts, and from the assurance they received of the solid benefits and lasting joy that would accrue through Christ's agency above. But the fact remains that their difficulties do not seem to have been categorically met. And the best perhaps that can be said on the matter is that the occurrence of such hard passages affords no mean argument in favour of the genuineness of the book in which they are found.

In this very remarkable discourse of Christ's here noticed, there are many things indicative of his character and claims, similar to some we had met with before, particularly in this gospel of John's. It may suffice, therefore, to notice only a few points, and we may begin with Christ's assertion that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Now a man may at times be said to be the way by which another obtains happiness or wealth or some other good. Yet what man but Christ could ever call himself 'the way' to God the Father? And even if a man may in some sense at times be a way, did ever any say that he was abstractedly 'the truth?' did ever any call himself 'the life?' Again, did we ever hear of any other man saying, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father?' Did any ever engage that after leaving earth he and the Father would come and dwell with a man? And did any one ever profess to have power to send the Spirit the Comforter to instruct his friends? Has any one ever likened himself to a living tree in which all fruitful branches must necessarily remain, and declare that apart from him no man could bring forth fruit to God?

SECTION CXVI.—*The Commendatory Prayer.*

(John xvii. 1-26.)

Often had Christ taught the people as one of authority. Often had he enlightened and comforted the disciples. But he had now as we have already noticed ceased altogether to declare his doctrines to the multitudes. And death was to part him from his faithful friends before he should again instruct them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He was now to be separated from the companions of his choice, and left in the midst of cruel and infatuated persecutors. His character was to be vilified, his back delivered to the smiters and his cheeks to

them that plucked off the hair, and his body brought to the dust of death. But he would not enter this scene of agony and blood without solemnly appealing to God for the manifestation of His approval of all that he had theretofore done. In the exercise of that power which had been given him over all flesh, in order that he might bring eternal life to men through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, he had glorified God. He could without qualification say that he had finished the work which God had given him to do, up to that moment. Confidently, then, he could call on God to glorify him with the glory he had had with the Father before the foundation of the world. Having thus called on God for all that he required for himself, Christ prayed for those whom from amongst all men in the world he had chosen to be his disciples. He had given them for their instruction the words* (*ρήματα*) with which God had inspired him. He had given them as a possession in their charge God's word† (*λόγον*). Thus had he both taught them and commissioned them. He now asked God to confirm this commission—to consecrate them in the‡ truth; for God's word communicated to them in Christ was truth.§ Christ declared that he consecrated himself as the representative of this ministry, as the head of all placed under him therein, in order that in him they also might receive their consecration in the truth for the work whereunto they were called. Having thus interceded for those who were then around him—having thus invoked the blessing of the Father on their office, he prayed for all who should to the end of time believe on him through that word which might thenceforth be said to be theirs.|| For it might rightly he called the word of the apostles and of their successors in the ministry,

* v. 8.

† v. 14.

‡ v. 17.

§ Christ had just called himself *the truth* (chap. xiv. 6), and John calls him *the word* (chap. i. 1).

|| v. 20.

inasmuch as it was now committed to them in trust for the benefit of all who through them would receive the truth. Christ also prayed that future believers, men not then born, might be admitted to the same union with the Father and himself as that which the disciples then present enjoyed. They were to show his glory as his gift; and he prayed that in him they all might be made perfect in one; that so the world seeing the efficacy of the bond that should unite Christian with Christian, and the whole body of Christians with Christ, might in due time become convinced that such a union was due to a more than earthly power; and might believe that Christ was indeed sent from God, and that God loved them as He loved His Son. Then Christ prayed, or we might rather say, expressed his will (*θέλω*), that those given him by God might be ever with him to see his glory. And lastly, with filial confidence, he committed himself and disciples to God as to a righteous, a just Father, who could neither forget the Son who had declared His Name and would yet declare it, nor the men who had received it and had thus become partakers of that love which God felt for the Son, and had secured Christ's abode in their hearts for ever.

In considering this section, it must be remembered (and it will bear repetition to state) that we have before us an address to God from one who was about to go forth alone to meet his adversaries, spiritual and human—to suffer the taunts of his countrymen and cruelty of the Gentiles without any one to stand by him to comfort him—for he knew he should witness the desertion of his friends and the denial of Peter. He was about to submit, amongst other dreadful things, to the misery of a raging thirst, the execrations of a furious mob, the shame of being stripped and exposed as a malefactor between earth and heaven, to the horrors of crucifixion and the pains of death. And

for what does the person going forth to meet all these things pray? He prays for glory! He intercedes for the beloved friends he was about to leave, and for all who should believe through their word. He makes known his will (as one might who had command of all things) that those who were just about to abandon him might share his glory! This man going now to suffer agony, shame, and capital punishment professes perfect confidence in the love of his Father and in his own power to be continually with his friends! A person knowing he was to be put to death in a few hours could not possibly have expressed himself thus if he had considered himself a mere man. Accordingly Christ is not represented as so considering himself, for in other parts of this address to God he makes the knowledge of himself equally with that of God essential for eternal life. He claims the possession of power over all flesh, he claims a reinvestment of the glory which he had had with the Father before the world was made.

SECTION CXVII.—*Communication to the Disciples of some Particulars of Things about to happen.*

(Matt. xxvi. 30-35; Mark xiv. 26-31; Luke xxii. 39; John xviii. 1.)

Christ now actually goes forth to meet all that was to come upon him. On his way he told his disciples again that they should all be offended because of him that very night; but promised that they should see him again in Galilee after his resurrection. He described also to Peter some circumstantial particulars about the denial.

We see here how Christ's mind was still occupied with kind solicitude for his friends. He said nothing about his own resolution in going forth voluntarily to meet the encounter when he might have hidden himself, or have escaped out of the guilty city, or have abandoned to their

fate the perverse people who were rejecting him. But he did much to aid the future faith of the disciples by minutely foretelling something soon to occur, and promising to meet them after his resurrection.

SECTION CXVIII.—*Gethsemane.*

(Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Mark xiv. 32-42; Luke xxii. 40-46.)

Now was reached the place where the sharp conflict was to begin—or perhaps we might say, where the sharpest of all conflicts was to be. The hard-won victory over temptation at the opening of his public career, when as a man he had suffered what had appeared the extremity of bodily exhaustion and diabolical device, did not make Christ think lightly of the struggle he was now to engage in. He was to be yet more terribly tried. The issue of the final temptation would be stupendous. If not the victor in it, every object for which he came into the world would be irretrievably lost. Christ knew that no power in the universe could make him faithless; but then, could his human nature bear the coming shock? He must offer up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, not for glory this time, but for strength to go through. And now, though he knew that he should be left alone as soon as men rose up against him, yet he was ready to avail himself of friendly help as long as he might have it; and he felt an irresistible craving for sympathy. But the moment was too overwhelmingly solemn for the presence of even the beloved eleven as a body. So those only who had seen his excellent glory on the mount were chosen to witness the depth of his humiliation and intensity of his agony. The beginning of an indescribable sorrow, a frightful terror, and an intolerable depression of spirit now came on him, and he retired with the three to a secluded spot and entreated them to stay and watch with

him ; for the sorrows of his soul were unendurable and deadly. Yet in the midst of all this, he remembered the critical position of those friends, and exhorted them to watch and pray that they might be spared temptation such as he was now entering upon. Then moving about restlessly in his extreme perturbation he went from them a short distance. Then he kneeled down—or rather threw himself on his face to the ground—and said, ‘Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’ Upon this he returned to his trusted companions. But there was none to help him; refuge failed him; no man cared for his soul. The friends he had chosen had gone to sleep! At this fresh shock he cried in astonishment to the man who had just been talking of unconquerable fidelity and love, ‘Is this possible, Simon? Canst thou have chosen such a time as this for sleep? Canst thou not watch one hour for me?’ Then he repeated his former caution to the three; adding, ‘Your spirit has been forward and willing, I know. But you will remember after this sad failure that flesh is but weak. Seek, then, a strength beyond your own against the power of temptation.’ Then, for a second time, leaving them a little he prayed again, saying, ‘O my Father! if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done!’ Longing for some one’s sympathy, he then returned to his friends, but met the same disappointment as before. The three were sleeping again! A second time he must have expressed his astonishment, for Mark tells us they wist not what to answer him. A third time he left them, and prayed in nearly the same words as before. Then we gather that he found himself pressed down under a load too great for unaided human nature even in sinless perfection to bear; for we are told that an angel from heaven (indignant, as we may suppose, at the wretched conduct of the three

disciples and resolving that Christ should see he was not left quite alone by every creature) assumed a visible shape in which to comfort and strengthen him.* But the help of no mighty angel could avail at such a moment as this, for we read that in Christ's agony, and the intensity of his supplications, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. But the acme of human suffering had been endured. The most horrible part of the sharpest conflict ever waged was over; and Christ was not vanquished. Able now to arise, he returned to the three, to find them again sleeping. Fresh astonishment was expressed, and a fresh caution administered. 'But as for any need of mine,' added Christ, with perfect self-possession, 'you may sleep on now and take your rest. Even if it were not perfectly useless to look to you for aid, I should desire it no longer. Though I have still much to endure, the remaining part of the conflict is of a kind to be borne by myself alone, for the moment is now at hand when the Son of man separated altogether from his friends must be delivered into the hands of sinners. But though I require not your help, it is quite impossible you should linger here. Things are going to happen in an instant or two that will most completely rouse you from your slumbers. Move you must. See! the betrayer is now close upon me.'

In this section some things are touched on which are utterly beyond our comprehension. There is no light that I can find thrown by the writers of the New Testament on the nature of the agony in Gethsemane. But some things are plain enough from Christ's words, and one of them is,

* I must be excused for so far departing from my regular plan of omitting mere narrative. It is necessary to include a little occasionally, and especially here, in order duly to connect the sayings of Christ one with another.

that in immediate anticipation of this agony, and during the time it lasted, he was the subject of feelings common to man. The overpowering impulse to pray in times of extremity—the disposition to retire in cases of intense mental suffering from the sight of one's ordinary associates—yet the simultaneous craving for the sympathy of a bosom friend or two—the physical prostration and anguish, and the nervous restlessness requiring change of place often symptomatic of a perturbed and overwrought mind, all these are things most certainly pertaining to human nature. And no touch is omitted in the records of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to show what a strain that human nature of Christ's underwent. But through all this, and the threefold mortification from disappointed confidence, he showed his kind care of his helpless friends. And then, as soon as the solitary mental conflict was over, we see the spirit and courage of a brave man ready to meet any number of foes in the array then coming against him.

SECTION CXIX.—*The Betrayal and the Apprehension of Christ and the Escape of the Eleven Disciples.*

(Matt. xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-52; Luke xxii. 47-54;
John xviii. 2-12.)

The act of betrayal was remarked on by Christ in a question of simple dignity that must have appalled Judas. No words of railing accusation could have cut the traitor to the heart like those that he could never after have ceased repeating to himself till he fell headlong in the field of blood: 'Ah! wherefore indeed did I go? How could I possibly have betrayed the Son of man? How could I, whom that innocent one never injured, have marked him out to those cruel murderers with a traitorous kiss?' However, the victim wasted no more breath on the

wretch, who must have wished that the rocks had fallen on him and the hills covered him before he touched the thirty pieces of silver and made himself the execration of mankind for ever. Christ then calmly said to those now advancing against him, 'Whom seek ye?' After they had answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth,' he said, 'I am he.' Then, Judas being amongst them, they went backward and fell to the ground. The question and answer were repeated, and Christ then added, 'I have told you that I am he, and as your orders are only to arrest me, I shall require you to leave my friends alone; I make no other conditions, but shall enforce this one, as you must see by what has just happened I have unquestionable power to do. Myself I deliver up to you, though if I chose I could make you all in a moment flee before me.' Then Peter, smarting under the recollection of what had just occurred in the garden, and being really a brave man and a lover of his master, drew, and slightly wounded one of the assailing party. Christ ordered him to put up his sword into the sheath again, and asked if he did not know that a single word of prayer to the Father would bring more than twelve legions of angels to his side? But how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled? Whilst uncertain that the cup before him was given by his Father's hand he had shrunk from it, but all indecision was over now. He was ready to drink it to the last drop. Then was Christ apprehended, or, as we should term it, secured. But seeing that the ear of one of the hostile band had been cut off by Peter's sword, he said, 'Give me the use of my hand for a moment,' and touched the part and healed it. At the same time he protested against the unworthy proceedings of the Jewish authorities in coming upon him at the dead of night after bribing one of his friends to lead them to his place of retirement. 'Was it,' said Christ, 'a thief who had not dared to show his face by day that they wished to surprise

in the commission of some felonious act? Why need they have seduced Judas, and gratuitously pained me with his treacherous kiss, when they might have met with me by day in the most frequented parts of the city? But the light suits not such a deed as this. Aided as you are by the powers of darkness you have rightly chosen your hour, the blackest time of night.'

We see here how Christ maintained the most perfect self-possession and showed the highest courage when he had to deal with an aggressive force of men. But beyond this, there was a lofty majesty, and an attitude of power, wielded by him which the armed band of rough and sordid beings could quite appreciate. And he exercised this power in making terms for his friends and obtaining the use of his hand for the healing of the ear of an assailant. Yet we see also the feelings of genuine human nature bursting from Christ in the exclamation, 'Are you come out against a thief?' He whose habit it had been to appear in the temple, publicly teaching and healing the people, he who had boldly cleansed the house of God, was treated as a skulking felon; and the sensitiveness of a manly heart could but cause him to protest.

SECTION CXX.—*The Palace of Caiaphas.*

(Matt. xxvi. 57, 58, 69-75; Mark xiv. 53-54, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-65; John xviii. 13-27.)

In steadily following out the plan of this inquiry, we have nothing to do with the circumstantial account of Peter's fall. Our business is with the recorded sayings of Christ, of which none appear in that sad story. But a silent look may be at times more eloquent than words. And never was more intelligible and effective communication made from master to disciple than when the deserted

captive in the high priest's palace turned his look on Peter. Passing however from this, we have to notice Christ's words during part of his examination by the Jewish authorities. Caiaphas had asked him of his disciples and doctrine. 'But,' said Christ, 'why should you ask me? Were I the deceiver that you represent me to be, I could not be expected to give an impartial account of myself; neither would you believe a word I said. And my teaching has been perfectly open and public. I was continually to be found proclaiming my doctrines in the synagogues and in the temple and other places where there was a great concourse of Jews; and I have not plotted in private; I have said nothing to my disciples in any way discordant with what I have declared before all men. There can be no difficulty in getting evidence; for all the people, and especially your own officers, who watched me, know what I have said and taught: your proper plan would be to ask them, and not me.' For so answering, Christ was struck on the mouth. But he thus noticed the unworthy act—'If I have said anything evil, state it, accuse me of it, and let me receive legal punishment. But if I have only pointed out a right course, and conducted my defence in a legitimate manner, and you have nothing to say to the contrary, why am I thus smitten?'

Calmness, moderation, and what we should term good sense and proper spirit, distinguish Christ's words in the high priest's house. He seems tacitly to admit that the time was come when the hierarchy of his people should conduct an official examination of his claims in his presence. They had taken an unworthy way of bringing him before their council, and they had in heart prejudged his cause; but he displayed no irritation on these accounts, and calmly reminded them how the case ought to be conducted. The blow on the mouth, which would either

have driven most men to exasperation or entirely quelled their spirit, had no such effects on Christ; but it was the occasion of an answer which is a perfect example of moderation and firmness and self-possession, and a dignified protest against an act of stinging injustice.

SECTION CXXI.—*Christ before the Council.*

(Matt. xxvi. 59-68; Mark xiv. 55-65; Luke xxii. 66-71.)

Christ's judges had done their utmost to find witnesses who would give evidence on which he might be condemned. They were utterly unable to procure them. At length they got two men to depose something that might be twisted into an accusation. But it was necessary for their purpose to alter his real words, and they did this so clumsily that their evidence broke down. These two false witnesses did not agree together. There was therefore no case against Christ, and he rebuked the irrelevant questions of the high priest by a dignified silence. As two men only had made any deposition whatever, and one of them contradicted the other, the evidence necessary before a man could receive condemnation of death was wholly wanting, and there was absolutely nothing for the accused to answer. Therefore Christ answered nothing. His judges then tried by a direct question to make him utter something that might excuse their condemnation of him. They said accordingly, 'Art thou the Christ? Tell us.' He replied, 'If I tell you, you will not believe what I say. And if I ask you to examine my claims for yourselves as you ought, and to form a righteous judgment, as men should who sit in Moses' seat, my requisition would be unheeded. You will shut your ears to my words. Were I incontestably to prove myself innocent, you would not lose your present opportunity of destroying me. No

answer of mine could now prevent my condemnation.' Thus spoke Christ, guided always by the spirit of law and justice. But now the awful moment approached when he must solemnly communicate his high pretensions to the Council of his nation, or for ever hold his peace. The high priest arose at the head of the Council of Seventy appointed by the law, and in dreadful state required him on his oath—adjured him by the living God—to tell them whether he were the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness, and magnified the law in every point, and recognised the right of the man who was officially the ruler of his people, found that the time was indeed come to speak. He replied, 'Thou hast said! Thus adjured, I tell you plainly, I am the Messiah. Moreover, I forewarn you that this is not the last time you shall see the Son of man now standing before you. You shall see him hereafter sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' 'What! Art thou then the Son of God?' they all exclaimed. He replied at once, 'Ye say that I am.'

Here we see Christ at first silent under a charge that required no refutation because entirely unsupported by evidence. But immediately afterwards, we see his recognition of legitimately constituted authority, represented though it was by an unworthy character. His conduct up to that time may be called thoroughly judicious; and that course, if persisted in, would have rendered it exceedingly difficult for the Council to find even a pretext for condemning him. But when adjured on oath, by one who had the power of administering it, to say who he was, he consulted not flesh and blood, but fearlessly made that declaration which he well knew would bring on him the sentence of death. We must particularly note that at this solemn moment, when his life was at stake, he

declared on his oath that he was the Son of God, and not in a sense in which any other man of the holy nation might be so called. The action of the high priest and his fellow members of the Sanhedrim conclusively shows us how this claim of Christ's must be understood. If any mere man had said what he did, they would have been right in condemning him for blasphemy.

SECTION CXXII. — *Christ before Pilate's Judgment Seat, in the Pretorium, and on the Way to Crucifixion.*

(Matt. xxvii. 11-34; Mark xv. 1-23; Luke xxiii. 1-32;
John xviii. 28-40, xix. 1-17.)

After hearing his sentence from the Jewish rulers, and being abandoned by them to the savage ill-treatment of the men who held him, and to all sorts of irritating and atrocious indignities, Christ was handed over to the Roman power that he might receive the judgment of death from the governor. It was some time before the priests and elders could make up any accusation that would justify Roman interference; and Pilate told them plainly that they had no case for him. But after considerable parlanee between the two parties, the Jews basely declared that Christ had forbidden to give tribute to Cæsar. Knowing however that this charge could not be proved according to the rules required by Roman law, they adroitly supported their assertion by a statement that could not be contradicted—that Christ had declared himself a king. Yet they could not say he claimed a kingdom in a sense that the Romans would in the least degree care about. So they accused him also of many other things. But Christ, knowing that a Roman governor could not be ignorant of the way in which a trial ought to be conducted, remained silent under accusations supported by no evidence whatsoever. Pilate

was astonished to see a Jew so entirely unlike the gesticulating, troublesome, and excited people around him. So he withdrew Christ for a time from the furious and unreasonable mob, and asked him in private, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' Christ rejoined, 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself? Dost thou indeed wish, as a Roman, to know if I am really a political pretender; or dost thou ask merely because of the accusation now made, and in order that something may be extracted from me which would give colour to a condemnation pleasing to the Jews?' Pilate replied, 'Am I a Jew? Think not that I trouble myself about their peculiarities or care personally what position thou holdest amongst them. I ask this of thee now because a word from one like thyself in private would help me to judge at once if there is any danger to my Government in this case. For anything I have seen I should certainly not have troubled myself about thee. But when thine own nation and the chief priests take so extraordinary a step as to bring a man before me for disaffection to the Roman power, I must at least enquire into the matter. So now tell me thyself candidly, what hast thou done?' Christ answered, 'The kingdom of which, it is quite true, I have often spoken, is not of this world, inasmuch as it springs out of no worldly force, and human ambition has nought to do with its origin. I command no military followers. My servants are plain, respectable persons, and I have ordered them not to defend me with the one or two weapons which are all they can muster among them: a pretender to an earthly throne must be prepared to resort if necessary to armed force. It may be easily ascertained that I have entered into no arrangements of the sort; though till within the last very few days my influence has been such that I might have assumed what authority I liked among the people, and I could have easily led them on to the over-

throw of your Government here. But I disclaim the use of the means always employed in this world for establishing power. Any one may see that my kingdom is not from thence.' Pilate said, 'Then thou art a king? As much as this is admitted?' And at this moment Christ witnessed what Paul calls a good confession. 'Thou sayest rightly,' he answered; 'I am a king. The object of my coming into the world as a man was that I might witness to the truth. And the great truth of my kingship I can never deny. And this I must add, even to thee, that every one who is of the truth gives heed to my words when he hears them.' Pilate, then, when he had put his celebrated question, 'What is truth?' went out from Christ's presence to declare to the people that he could find no fault in him at all. Then hearing that Christ came from Galilee, he sent him to Herod, intending both to pay that tyrant a compliment which cost him nothing, and to get clear of an affair which had become embarrassing to so time-serving a ruler as himself. But Herod, not to be outdone in costless civilities, after mocking the unjustly-detained prisoner, sent him back to Pilate, who then again publicly declared his belief in Christ's innocence, and stated also that Herod could find no fault in him. Inferring however from the pertinacity of the Jews that some trifling irregularities might have been committed, the governor suggested that a chastisement would be a quite sufficient penalty; and after this had been administered, he proposed to let the prisoner go. Indeed, even if he had been really guilty of sedition, he might be the culprit selected for release that year according to the custom of the governor at the feast. The multitude however demanded the discharge of Barabbas in preference; and required the crucifixion of Christ, who was then scourged, mocked, and ill-treated in a dreadful variety of ways. Then Pilate, probably thinking that the

injurious and shameful atrocities already committed on a harmless man would satisfy the Jews, went forth to them and said that he should bring him once more before them, that they might know that he found no fault in him. Then Christ came out bleeding, abused, and wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe; and Pilate said, 'Behold the man! See how he suffers! His punishment is greatly more than any minor offence can deserve, and I cannot justly—indeed, I will not—carry it further.' But the unfeeling people renewed their cry, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate, by this time disgusted with the affair, exclaimed with irritation, 'Then take him yourselves and crucify him if you will; I shall not sentence an innocent man.' The Jews then changed their ground, and answered that Christ had made himself the Son of God, and that therefore by their law he ought to die. Remembering the remarkable demeanour of the prisoner and the expressions uttered by him, Pilate, whose anxiety had already become great, was then the more afraid; and withdrawing for another private conference he asked Christ from whence he was. But as that information could have made no difference to the course of justice, the rights of the case being sufficiently obvious, Christ made him no answer. Pilate, astonished at this absence of servility on the part of a poor prisoner whose fate he thought was entirely in his hands, said, 'Dost thou not choose to speak to me? Irrelevant questions put by the leaders of that frantic Jewish mob thou hast properly treated with silent contempt; but when I, representing the majesty of the Roman Government, think fit to ask for information for my guidance in a difficult matter, I expect an answer. And it would be well to give me one, for I have not yet condemned thee, pressed as I am by those ferocious cries outside. Act not as one ignorant that I have power to crucify thee and power to release

thee.' To this Christ replied, 'As a man thou hast no power to do what I well know is to follow. My life is not in the hands of any creature in the universe. Thou mayest indeed, as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty, order my execution. But even so thou shalt have to answer before eternal justice for thine act, the sin of which, committed in spite of all warnings and the certainty of my innocence, will be followed by the direst shame and remorse. But a greater sin than thine is that of the priests and elders; who, having the law and the prophets, have delivered over to thee for condemnation one whom they ought to have hailed as their predicted king.' There was something in this answer and the manner of the man who uttered it that made Pilate determine to do right as far as might be. The scourging and other ill-treatment could not now be helped, but he resolved that there Christ's sufferings at his hands should stop. But the Jews knew well what Pilate's good resolutions were worth when his interests were concerned. They cunningly reminded him therefore that Christ had made himself a king, and suggested that by that very act he had declared himself against Cæsar, and that therefore Pilate could not be Cæsar's friend if he should let Christ go. This had the desired effect on the wavering mind they had to deal with. Thoroughly alarmed now at the idea of being reported to a tyrant like Tiberius as an abettor of one who had risen against Rome's imperial power, Pilate finally gave way, and, after vainly washing his hands before them all, pronounced formal sentence against Christ, and delivered him to the cruel will of the Jews. Then was Christ led forth to the frightful punishment of crucifixion, and made to carry his cross, altogether or with some assistance, as far along the way as his exhausted and injured frame could bear the load; and crowds of excited spectators followed. But he was not

left to go without the sympathy of some women, who bewailed and lamented the loving teacher who had the words of eternal life, the kind benefactor of the poor and afflicted. Turning to his weeping friends, he said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, I accept your courageous sympathy. But weep not for me. Weep rather for yourselves and your children. A few hours longer, and my sufferings are all over. But dreadful days are coming for Jerusalem, in the which those shall be counted happy who have never borne a son, or never reared a child to share the horrors in store for this nation. For then shall they even call on the mountains to fall on them, and on the hills to cover them. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If so many tears fall when a good man is going with a good conscience to meet his death, what sort of wailings shall there be when a terrible misery shall come upon this guilty people, and a deserved destruction overwhelm the inhabitants of your city!' And so they came to Golgotha; and Christ, when he had tasted the potion provided for deadening the keenness of pain, refused to receive it.

Here we see Christ's power and dignity manifested before Pilate. A man standing at the bar of justice as a poor and friendless criminal, obliged the representative of the greatest and most civilised power of the world, in a surprising manner, to treat him with respect. The outcast, as it were, of the despised Jewish nation, impressed the Roman governor with a feeling of awe. Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good profession, acknowledging himself to be a king, though but for this admission, perhaps, Pilate could not have delivered him to crucifixion. For it was expressly as 'King of the Jews' that he sentenced him and exposed him on the cross.

We must note that Christ declared to this heathen that he was sent into the world to bear witness to the truth, and that all who were of the truth would listen to his words. No question more pertinent and seasonable could have been possibly put than that which immediately followed from Pilate; and had not the wavering man directly afterwards thought it beneath him to wait for an answer, he might have been satisfied. To appreciate Christ's perfect command of temper, his courage, readiness, and dignified bearing, we should remember that he had submitted to a Roman flagellation, to ill-treatment, mockery, and beating from Gentile soldiers; that he was suffering from want of rest for a night, and the fatigue of standing before the high priest, the Roman governor, and Herod; and of walking to and fro between the courts of the two great men. And after all this, and during the fresh labour of carrying his cross, he had strength and self-possession to tell the daughters of Jerusalem to weep not for him, but for themselves and their children, for what he foresaw must come to pass.

SECTION CXXIII.—*Christ on the Cross.*

(Matt. xxvii. 35-50; Mark xv. 24-37; Luke xxiii. 33-46;
John xix. 18-30.)

Fastened on the cross, and lifted up to hang in pain and shame between two thieves, Christ spoke at intervals a few most noteworthy words. The first utterance that came from him in this climax of torture was the prayer for those who were unwittingly executing the divine purposes whilst they were the instruments of his death, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

Next, we have his words to the thief. In the midst of the taunts of the people, the wagging of heads of the passers by; the derision, first, of the chief priests, rulers,

scribes, and elders, then of the Roman soldiers, lastly even of a wretched criminal suffering the due reward of vice and dishonesty—the accumulation of misery and gloom was penetrated by one gleam of joy sufficient perhaps for a moment to neutralise the agonies of Christ. He accepted the sympathy and witnessed the repentance and good profession of a sinner. A lost one by his side, whom he had come to save, crowded into a short hour or two the proofs of a justifying and fruitful faith, and obtained this testimony from Christ, ‘Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!’

And, as the dismal afternoon wore on, an affecting incident called forth some touching words. Three women with pierced hearts—the three who perhaps personally loved him most—his mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene, stood by the cross. The beloved disciple, too, who had now recovered from the first surprise of fright, stood with them. Christ, seeing his mother close by, with his bosom friend, said, ‘Woman, behold thy son—this John, now at thy side. All but dissolved is the relationship between me and thee; but I will leave him for thee to love. I have tried his love myself. Let him be thy son and protector, till thou also shalt be called away from this evil world.’ Then said he to John, ‘Behold thy mother. Take loving care of her from this time in thine own home, as a most precious charge from me.’

Then, after three dreary hours of darkness and nearly six of awful suffering, there came the bitter cry, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!’ from one who was hanging as the reproach of men, the scorn of the people, with strength dried up like a potsherd, one soon now to be brought to the dust of death. Would not any bystander have said it was plain that God had forsaken him? Can we wonder if the true man hanging on the cross felt the want of some

visible token of God's presence; and if, in his trouble, exhaustion, and pain, the thought came over him that there might be some reason in the taunts of the Jews, that if his Father had delighted in him He might have come with deliverance? Who can say that Christ's human mind was not thus exercised? On the other hand, be it remembered, Christ's words prove no despair; they are but a quotation from a Psalm which goes on to praise the Lord and to show a joyful confidence that the seemingly forsaken one shall yet declare God's Name unto his brethren, and praise Him in the midst of the congregation. Besides, if this twenty-second Psalm was understood by Christ's contemporaries to refer to the Messiah, his words might have been intended as a significant indication to the people of the character of him whom they were reviling.

Such points need not perhaps be fully understood. But there is no doubt that Christ was at that time making the language of the twenty-second and sixty-ninth Psalms his own. And feeling now that the end was not far, he said, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, 'I thirst. My tongue cleaveth to my jaws.' And, in the words of the latter Psalm, they gave him vinegar to drink.

Then, after his parched lips had been thus moistened, he knew he had suffered enough—he had done enough. He said, 'It is finished.'

Only one thing more remained. If the consciousness of his Father's love had ever been weakened, it now returned in its full strength. So, with the emotion of a happy traveller who at last has home and joy before him after a long and dismal journey, he, who had claimed power to lay down his life and take it again, concentrated his remaining forces in one last effort, and with a loud voice cried, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!'

Here we have *the Seven Sayings of Christ on the Cross*. And what should we naturally think that a person in a state of inconceivable bodily and mental pain would have spoken of but his own agonies? And we should remember that a human soul constituted, and body organised, so perfectly as Christ's necessarily were (or he could not have done and said the things recorded of him), must have made him feel more keenly than any other could have done the sharpness of the sword awakened to smite the shepherd of the people. Yet but two of those sayings refer in any way to his own sufferings; and we know not whether the intention even of those two was not to call the notice of the Jews to his true character, or to the fulfilment of prophecy in his person. They showed also the unclouded state of his memory which supplied his thoughts with a sacred vehicle of expression oft used by him. The other five utterances consisted of—a prayer and excuse for those who were putting him to death; a comforting assurance to a dying companion; a commendation of his mother to the care of his loved disciple; a cheerful recognition of the fact that his work had at length been completed; and a commendation of his own spirit to his Father's hands. Comment on the sayings on the cross must needs be feeble, but in furtherance of our plan it is our duty to note in them:—

1. The nobleness of Christ's intercession for those engaging in his torture.

2. The power claimed even in the depths of shameful humiliation, and at the moment of submitting to dissolution, to dispose of places in Paradise.

3. The care he took of the mother whom he was to leave on earth, and the authority he assumed to regulate the relationship of those who had known him after the flesh, but were now to do so no more.

4. The reality and intensity of the sufferings endured

by Christ's human body and soul. Or, the care he took even then to let the people know his claims.

5. The same ; and a self-possessed determination that no part of Scripture should go unfulfilled.

6. The conscious satisfaction felt by one who, in spite of the greatest obstacles, has, at last, thoroughly performed a work taken in hand—the happy calmness of a man who knows that his labours and temptations are now things of the past, and that he has been faithful even unto death.

7. The confidence with which he committed his spirit into his Father's hands, now that he had completely done God's business in working thereat ever since the utterance of his first-recorded words. Most certainly he at this moment submitted to death. But he who safely challenged the world to convince him of sin, he who claimed to have life in himself, said nothing here about death. By the exercise of his will he dismissed his spirit ; and this as an act of his own, not as a necessity of his nature. And were not his last words uttered with a prophetic view to the comfort of his followers at the closing scene of their earthly course to the end of time ? At the supreme moment of his own sufferings, did not Christ think of his people when he termed a departure from this life a rendering up of the spirit into the hands of a ' Father ' ?

SECTION CXXIV.—*The Appearance of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene.*

(John xx. 1-18.)

The gate of death had now closed upon him who professed to have life in himself. But according to the four Evangelists and other writers in the New Testament, that gate was forced to open for his exit : and various particulars of exceeding interest are given in the gospels of things that occurred between the moment of Christ's

death, and the visit to his tomb, on the second morning after, made by the weeping Magdalene while it was yet dark. For the purposes of our investigation I must have nothing to do with these narratives, except in as far as they may be found necessary to prepare us for the words of the risen Christ. We must picture to ourselves, then, a loving and deeply-disappointed mourner turning back from the sepulchre as a place she cared for no longer, though now illuminated by the presence of angels, as it held not him whom she sought. Suddenly she perceived that a man was standing by her. Overwhelmed with the discovery just made of a new and totally unexpected cause of grief, she could not, as we may easily understand, have supposed it possible that the man, seen dimly in twilight through her tears, could have been her Lord. Too well she knew that he had been put to death, and she could no more have thought of seeing him there than any of us could expect to find a man standing near us two days after he had been buried. It must be remembered also that some of the accounts would lead us to conclude that the body with which Christ arose, although the very same as that which was nailed to the cross, for it showed the marks of the nails and the spear, had, in becoming clad in immortality, acquired an indescribable semblance, that there was thenceforth somewhat to be noticed in his mien, distinct from aught familiar to his friends before. Be this as it may, we cannot wonder that Mary should have failed to recognise Christ, even when he said, 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' How natural her impression that the questioner must be an official connected with the place! With the impulsiveness of her disposition she caught at this opportunity of getting information from the person most likely to know why the body had been removed from the tomb. So she eagerly interrogated him, and, to smooth all difficulties

that might be started, engaged to relieve him of further trouble, and to take upon herself all responsibility in the matter. But Christ could no longer keep her in suspense. He said, 'Mary!' 'Can that word, that voice, have come from other lips but my Master's?' thought she, or rather felt she, in a moment. Sharply, then, she turned from her half-averted posture, looked full in his face, exclaimed, 'Rabboni!' and flew towards him, overjoyed to hold her Lord in an embrace from which nothing should again tear him. But heedless impetuosity and over-excitement were not to be indulged, even at such a moment as that. 'Touch me not,' said Christ; 'stay not now to embrace me. You can render me and mine a better service. You shall have other opportunities of meeting me before I finally leave this earth. Show your love now by hastening to my brethren and saying what you have seen. Tell them that I live again, but not to be exposed any more to the hatred and persecution of the world. My state is one now of dignity infinitely beyond that of mortal man. My body, not now to be treated with familiarity, is fit for the presence of God on high. Say then to my mourning friends, that as their elder brother I shall before long ascend to my Father and their Father, to my God and their God.'

For particulars of Christ's life we are dependent entirely on the New Testament; and many persons probably suppose that it is only through the Bible that we know of his having been put to death. But it is not so. It is a matter of history—of secular history quite independent of the Bible—that the Romans took upon themselves to conduct the execution of Christ. And what they did they did thoroughly; so that we need not the careful particulars given us by an eyewitness of the consequences of the spear-thrust, to be as certain of the fact

of the death of Jesus Christ as of any fact that ever occurred. But the Evangelists who record the events of his life and death declare that, though he had been taken down from the cross dead, and had been buried in a tomb closed by a great stone, and watched by Roman soldiers, he rose again never to return to the grave. They state that he uttered certain sayings during the time that he remained on earth before ascending to the Father. Although, then, we have noted his last cry on the cross, our undertaking is not over. We have to examine whether or not the recorded words of Christ in a resurrection body are worthy of the conqueror of death and the opener of the gates of everlasting life. In this section, therefore, we must consider the words addressed to Mary Magdalene.

They are scarcely such as might have been expected from one dear friend to another under such circumstances. Nature was never more truly drawn perhaps than in this story of the conduct and words of Mary. But the check that ardently loving woman had from Christ is not easily comprehended at first. But how full of majesty are his words! There is about them, if not a natural, yet a supernatural dignity. There is affection for Mary and the disciples, and a claim of intimate connection with the Father and of resumed fitness for the glory that had shone from the throne of God before the foundation of the world. There is at the same time an assertion of his human nature in Christ's loving recognition of the disciples as his brethren.

SECTION CXXV.—*Appearance to some Women.*

(Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.)

After a word of joyful salutation, upon which the women fell down before him in awe and adoration to hold his

feet, Christ calmed their fears and told them to leave him for the present and go to his brethren and take them his orders to proceed to Galilee, where they should see him. I think we are authorised to consider this appearance as distinct from that to Mary Magdalene. She might, as related in the first gospel, have set out with the other women, and, leaving them, have returned, as John tells us, to notify to the disciples that the sepulchre was empty. It is not at all impossible that from some circumstance or other she should have failed to meet her former companions again at the tomb.

Assuming the above hypothesis to be correct, we may see here the wisdom and kindness of Christ in adapting the manner of his greetings to the different characters of Mary Magdalene and the other women. These were thoroughly frightened. He reassured them by a joyful salutation, and encouraged them against their fears. Intense desire to find her Lord, ardent love and absorbing grief had filled the heart of Mary Magdalene to the exclusion of any trace of fear; she therefore had no fright to calm. And though both she and the other women received a message to be taken instantly, the particulars were by no means identical, for here we have the promise of meeting the disciples in Galilee. Was it not an act of thoughtful kindness to direct their minds to a time coming within a few days, when they might for a while depart from the spot of so many painful recollections and join their loved master again in the land of their own homes, on the shores of the lakes wherein they had toiled in their youth, on the borders of which they had so often heard the words of life? And was there not, too, a calm pleasure of anticipation in Christ? a natural human desire to revisit scenes rich in remembrance of early days, places where hours had been often passed in meditation and prayer, and

where his youthful mind had gradually opened to the things in the Scriptures concerning himself? Would not even he, now that labour and persecution were past for ever, feel some satisfaction in seeing again the country where most of his mighty works had been done?

SECTION CXXVI.—*Appearance on the Way to Emmaus and Recognition there.*

(Mark xvi. 12 ; Luke xxiv. 13-35.)

The actual words of Christ recorded in this highly interesting section are but few. ‘What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk and are sad? May I, as one going your way, and desiring leave to walk with you, be permitted to ask the cause of your evident perplexity and distress? My sympathy at least you can be sure of. But who knows if I may not be able to throw some light on the matter that gives you so much concern? What can have taken place to trouble you so greatly?’ ‘Why, if thou art but a stranger in Jerusalem,’ said Cleopas, ‘the things must be known to thee that have just happened there.’ ‘But what things?’ said he who knew better than any one else, but wished to reason with them as man with man rather than to command their belief as by a voice from the other world. Then, when they had told him all, he exclaimed, ‘Oh, where is your understanding? How can ye be so slow of heart? How can ye possibly believe all that the prophets have written and yet fail to see that the Christ they predict must suffer these things in entering upon his glory?’

Is there not here a striking instance of the wisdom we have so often had occasion to remark on? How was the faith of these two men best to be confirmed? How were

they best to be rendered steadfast through after-life? We see how Christ determined the matter. Their minds were stored with a certain knowledge, and he took that as a starting point. They were earnest, argumentative, reasoning men. And Christ never said it is dangerous to reason; and you must not examine facts too closely but receive all things you are told, on superior authority. On the contrary, concealing his identity that they might be convinced by reason only, he asked them why they did not exercise their understanding more. He remarked on the want of quickness in their perceptions. He put before their mental faculties proof after proof, till their hearts burned within them. And thus were they prepared for the glad moment when he was known of them in the breaking of bread.

SECTION CXXVII.—*Appearance to the Apostles.*

(Mark xvi. 14; Luke xxiv. 36-43; John xx. 19-23.)

The eleven were taking their evening meal together and talking over the astounding events of the last few days. The accounts brought from time to time that very day by the women, then by Peter himself, and now by the two wayfarers just returned from Emmaus had greatly excited them. The doors where they were assembled were carefully fastened for fear of the Jews, when they became conscious of the arrival of one in their midst who said, 'Peace be unto you!' Fright seized them like that of Eliphaz when a spirit passed before him and fear and trembling made all his bones to shake and the hair of his head to stand up. But he from whom the kind greeting had proceeded said, 'Why are you troubled? Why should you be overcome with fright because your master who was dead appears again before you? For your master I really and truly am. Look on me, for I am not a ghost. See

by the hands that I hold out, and my feet which I now uncover, that it is I myself, a real, living man. Handle me if you please, and you will find that I have what a spirit has not, flesh and bones.' Their fears were thus calmed, but still they could scarcely regain their senses for amazement and joy. So Christ in order perfectly to reassure them asked for some food, which he actually ate in their presence. Then he spoke of their slowness of belief and hardness of heart, and again said, 'Peace be unto you!' And with the authority of a prince granting commissions to his officers, he added, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' Then breathing on them, he said, 'Receive the Holy Ghost. Whosoever's sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever's sins ye retain they are retained.'

Here we must note the very great kindness and condescension of the risen Christ. And we must not overlook the willingness he showed to offer the fullest proofs to those sincere ones who required them. He seems to have determined to make them sure that he was a living man, with human flesh and bones, and capable of eating; though he had died by crucifixion, had afterwards received the spear-thrust in his side, and had been buried. By the last part of the section we see how he claimed for himself the highest conceivable power—that of communicating the Holy Ghost, and of giving from himself authority to remit and retain sins. It seems to me that there is here a claim to be equal with God who is said to have been the Author of human life by breathing into Adam. Christ breathed into his disciples the Holy Ghost, that life-giving Spirit. Either the intention was to breathe life into the general body of the church (the eleven *and them that were with them*, Luke xxiv. 33), or to endow the apostles with that special gift of the Holy Ghost which again they should

impart by the laying on of hands.* Finally we must note how careful Christ was to show the identity of the risen with the crucified man.

SECTION CXXVIII.—*Another Appearance of Christ to the Apostles, Thomas being on this Occasion Present.*

(John xx. 24–29.)

‘Peace be with you!’ was again the salutation of Christ on presenting himself before his assembled apostles. It was the eighth day after his resurrection, and the second time of his appearing to their general body. On the first occasion Thomas had been an absentee from some cause or other—we are sure not from want of love to his master’s memory. We know what he rashly declared when told by the ten that they had seen the Lord; but there is no reason for asserting that he doubted more than any other apostle would who might have been absent when Christ came to the rest and furnished such manifest proofs. And it is on record that Christ readily assented to the condition named by the impulsive disciple. ‘Reach hither thy finger,’ he said to Thomas, ‘and behold my hands; and

* I desire gratefully to speak of Dean Alford’s ‘Greek Testament,’ as being by far the best of the commentaries I have had by me while engaged in this enquiry. But I do not see the force of his observation on John xx. 22: ‘That *no formal gifts of apostleship were now formally conferred is plain by the absence of Thomas*, who in that case would be no apostle in the same sense in which the rest were.’ Now the body of the apostles went by the name of ‘the eleven’ at that particular juncture, and the assembly in question was called ‘the eleven’ by Mark and Luke. The accidental absence of one man or more made no difference. Paul was an apostle as well as Thomas. When did he receive the gift that he communicated to Timothy and others by the laying on of hands? It is an impossible task to prove to impartial men that the strictly personal continuity of apostolic succession has existed unbroken in the Church of England; but the absence of Thomas, Matthias, and Paul on the occasion before us may prove, to the comfort of some, that an accidental break is not fatal.

reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side. I cannot suffer thee to become fixed in thine unbelief. Take the proofs of thine own choosing, and believe.' Awestruck, and from that moment full of faith, Thomas apprehended in an instant the repeated declarations that had been made by Christ to an understanding hitherto most slow to believe. He saw now what had been meant when, in answer to a pertinacious question from his own mouth, Christ had said, 'If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.' Now, therefore, with reverence, as before a manifestation of the Divinity, Thomas said unto Christ, 'My Lord and my God!' Christ answered, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. And well it is for thee that in any way whatever faith is now attained. But faith may be founded on better things than those of sight. Too unenduring are often such proofs. Thou thyself, after bravely offering to accompany me to a district of mortal danger, didst hear my prayer at the grave of Lazarus and witness the miracle that followed when one rose from the dead. But impressions from such things are soon forgotten. Happy are those who need not the proof of miracle, who require not to have the evidence of heavenly things made palpable to their senses. Happy are they who can feel the truth of my words and the power of my resurrection in their hearts. Happy are they who have thus the witness in themselves, they who have not seen and yet have believed!'

Here we see how Christ adopted no stiff undeviating line in dealing with the different natures of men. 'Touch me not,' he had said to the enthusiastic and faithful Mary Magdalene. 'Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side,' he said to the doubting Thomas. And these sayings, so apparently opposite, are both related by one

Evangelist. We see also that he uttered not a word of reproof when the apostle said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Finally, it may not be out of place to remark that the history of the church proves the truth to this day of Christ's words about the blessedness of those who, having not seen, have believed. Whilst good and zealous Christians have often honestly striven to establish men's faith by objective means, all experience shows us that there is a more excellent way.

SECTION CXXIX.—*Christ's Appearance to Some of the Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.*

(John xxi. 1-24.)

The apostles, having been told that their risen master would join them in Galilee, were beginning to come together again in the scenes of their early discipleship. Perhaps they were all there in groups not far apart from each other, awaiting according to their several circumstances the intimation of Christ's arrival. On the shore of the Lake of Tiberias, for instance, Peter was to be seen, accompanied by Thomas and Nathanael, the brothers James and John, and two others. Peter said to them, 'We need not wait idly. Why not make use of our time and do something to get our own bread, though we are expecting Christ? Once I knew something about fishing, and so did some of you. Let us hire a boat, and see what can be caught here. If we do not go too far out we shall always be within hail when the master's time for showing himself again to us shall come.' The others agreed, and so fishing they went. But the skill of Peter and the sons of Zebedee served them not that time. A whole night they remained out but took nothing. In the morning, before it was quite light, they perceived that some one, they knew not who, was standing on the shore. He called

to them asking in friendly tones if they had been successful enough to be able to spare something good from their take for a morning meal? 'We have taken nothing at all,' was the answer returned to the enquirer, who thereupon cried, 'Then cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find!' They did so, and their net was overfull in an instant. John, whose perceptions were quick as his feelings were deep, said to Peter, 'This must be the Lord.' Peter, knowing at once that it could be none other, thought no more of fish or boat—his friends might take care of them if they would. Hastily he put on the garment he had thrown aside for work, and cast himself into the sea to get to Christ at once. He was before long followed to shore by his more steady fellow-disciples, bringing with them their cumbrous prize. By kind consideration on the part of their master they had been saved the delay and trouble of making preparations for a meal, for they found some hot provision all but ready for them. In the meantime they were told by Christ to bring of the fish they had just caught. And then Peter, who had left all for the sake of Christ, was the foremost to set to work again; and with the assistance probably of the others, though he was quite ready to undertake it alone, brought in safely the hundred and fifty-three large fishes which they had caught. Then said Christ, 'Now come after your hard work and enjoy the repast ready for you here,' and he with his own hands gave out the bread and fish so unexpectedly provided for them. This plenteous meal being over, Christ said to Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?' Peter felt the force of every one of these searching words. He knew that Christ meant, 'I changed thy name once; but nothing could be less like a rock than thou, at the palace of Caiaphas. Then thou wast the old Simon Bar-jona rather than the steadfast Peter. Thou, who didst profess to be ready to

go to prison and to death for me, and didst say that if all forsook me yet wouldst not thou, wast the only one of my true disciples to deny me. Wilt thou venture now to say that thou lovest me more than do these?’ In reply Peter could not but say that he loved him, but modestly refrained this time from comparison. Christ thereupon showed that he kindly accepted this answer by saying to Peter, ‘Feed my lambs. I may at least trust thee to give the young and tender of my flock the sincere milk of the word.’ Yet Christ said again, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Is thy present love such as would stand a fiery trial?’ Upon receiving the same answer as before, Christ said, ‘Feed my sheep. I restore thee to thy full office. Tend equally the young and old, the weak and strong, of my flock.’ Still once more Christ said, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Thy denials of me have been forgiven, yet it is well that thou shouldst feel how grievous it was to thy master to hear thee say the third time, “I know not the man.”’ Peter did indeed feel this now, and cried out, ‘Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!’ Christ then said, ‘Feed my sheep. Lovingly I receive thee again, and by this thrice ratified commission, I, as the Chief Shepherd, fully reinstate thee. Receive thy charge again direct from myself, and be an example to the flock of which thou shalt have the oversight. Proof enough thou shalt indeed give of the strength and steadiness of thy love to me. Hitherto thou hast enjoyed the freedom of action so greatly prized by thy energetic nature. But the time will come, and that before long, when thou shalt willingly for my sake allow thyself to be led to the enforced idleness of a prison. More than that, thou shalt when old readily yield thy yet active limbs to be stretched out in a manner that flesh and blood must shrink from. With humble exultation thou shalt go away to be bound for that shameful and cruel mode of

death which shall close thy earthly career for ever. Full well I know that thou wilt not now repeat thy former confident assurances, but thou canst quietly testify thy willingness to become a partaker of my sufferings. Attend me now as I move; and so show thyself ready to follow thy Lord even to the death of the cross.' The Evangelist deemed it not needful to tell us of the alacrity with which Peter gave this signal of devoted love. But he mentions that this earnest disciple seeing John also quietly following, could not refrain from saying, 'Lord, and what shall this man do? Shall John also glorify God by that same painful death?' Christ answered, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Trouble thyself not about the experiences of thy fellow-disciples. It is a great honour for thee to have to close thy course in the same way as thy master; but John may glorify me quite as much by a patient continuance in well-doing to extreme old age, if I determine upon that course for him. If I will that his faithful and loving services be prolonged till I visit the earth for the overthrow of the present order of things, and so open the world to my gospel of light and truth, thy proper course will not thereby be altered. Take care to perform it well. Look to thyself. Do thine own duty. Follow *thou** me.'

In the order, 'Cast the net on the right side,' and the invitation, 'Come, and take your refreshment'—words which were not, as we know, mere empty sounds—we see instances of kind considerateness on the part of Christ, both in providing for Peter and his companions a wonderfully successful result of industry, and in furnishing them

* In verse 19, before Peter's question had been put, it is simply 'Follow me;' but after that question, it is (in verse 22), 'Follow thou me.' The *σὺ* is expressed in the latter instance, and is the more emphatic from omission in the former.

with an excellent and invigorating meal when fatigued by their labours. And in the treatment of Peter's case it is impossible to imagine a finer exhibition of firmness and kindness. The grievous offence, forgiven as it was, could not be overlooked; and deeply wounded did Peter feel at the thrice-asked question of his Lord. Yet was ever man made more exultingly happy than he when he received the final charge, 'Feed my sheep; follow me?' We see also Christ's claim to a knowledge of the several future courses of his disciples—a claim which, as none I presume will dispute, was justified by subsequent facts. We see also the power he assumed of regulating the length of his disciples' term of service, for he says not, 'If God will that John tarry,' &c., but 'If I will.' Lastly, we must note the admirable wisdom with which he delivers the lesson to his followers to attend to their own individual duties without troubling themselves about what their brethren are doing; and to avoid supposing that God can only be glorified by the display of prominent activity and the endurance of conspicuous trials.

SECTION CXXX.—*Instructions and Commissions delivered to the Apostles in Galilee.*

(Matt. xxviii. 16-20; Mark xvi. 15-18; Luke xxiv. 44-49.)

Either at this time or earlier, it is difficult to define which, Christ showed his disciples, as we are told by Luke, how his words to them, misunderstood before, and how all the writings of Moses and the prophets and Psalmist concerning him, had been fulfilled in his life and his works, in his death and resurrection. These things being now accomplished, it remained to give effect to them by proclaiming repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name to mankind. But though this must be

done to all nations in due time, it was to be begun at Jerusalem.

It seems that at the meeting in Galilee, some of the disciples were in an anxious state. They joyfully hailed the appearance of their Lord, and recognised the fact of his resurrection by worshipping him, but their minds were perturbed about their own prospects. Their master had talked of going away from them into the immediate presence of his Father. Who would care for and direct them then? They doubted what course they should be obliged to take, and knew not what work they should have to do. But Christ determined to leave no room for disquietude or uncertainty on these important points. He assured them accordingly that all power was given to him, not only in heaven, but also on earth; and that they should be well cared for, for he would be able to watch over and protect them still. And as to their proceedings and work, he gave the most explicit instructions. They were to assemble at Jerusalem, and wait there till they should receive that which he had promised to send them from the Father. As to their weakness, they would not feel it; for they should then be endowed with power from on high. On this they were to go and proclaim the gospel in all the world, to make disciples in all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and then teaching their converts all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. Of the men who should thus receive Christ's word through his apostles, those who believed should be saved, those who believed not should be condemned. 'And go ye to your work as heralds of my gospel fearlessly and confidently,' Christ seems to have added; 'for though you shall see not my bodily presence, I will be really with you to the end of the world.' He further encouraged them by the assurance that certain signs should distinguish those who

believed the preaching of his immediate followers. They should have the power of casting out devils, of speaking in new tongues, of taking up serpents and of receiving poisonous substances with impunity, of laying hands on the sick and so procuring their recovery. Thus should Christ's apostles be qualified, as his witnesses in Jerusalem and in all nations. They had heard his words and seen his acts, they were satisfied from personal knowledge that he had died and risen again, and now they were to make him known in all the earth.

We see here Christ's care for the anxieties of the apostles, and for their due preparation for the important work they were very shortly to commence. We note also his claim of all power in heaven and earth, and of ability to send the Spirit from above to his disciples, and to invest them with miraculous gifts and immunities. We must observe too how explicitly he joins the name of the Son with that of the Father and that of the Holy Ghost. There seems no inequality whatever in these names from the way in which Christ puts them. Lastly, we must note the supernatural faculty he claims of being present* with his disciples after he should be taken out of their sight, through all the days† of their appointed work, even to the end—to the accomplishment of his designs, the completion of the new era he came to introduce.

SECTION CXXXI.—*The Ascension.*

(Mark xvi. 19; Luke xxiv. 50–53; Acts i. 4–12.)

The disciples were yet again to meet for another interview with their Master, but that one was to be the last on

* There is an ἐγὼ . . . εἰμι in Matt. xxviii. 20, which reminds one of God's words to Moses, and of the ἐγὼ εἰμι in John viii. 58.

† πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

earth. They assembled then in the neighbourhood of Bethany. Christ at that place appeared in their midst, and accompanied them to Mount Olivet. He repeated the injunction previously given them to wait at Jerusalem till the promise of the Father had been received; for as certainly as John's converts had been baptised with water, they should be baptised with the Holy Ghost. But the disciples had still one matter on their minds, one question to put. They had always expected a Messiah who should deliver Israel. Now the Messiah was certainly come. They did not dispute that. And he had triumphed over death and Hades. All power was in his hands. Then why should he not at once establish his kingdom in glorious state over all the earth? They themselves had been promised twelve thrones from which they should judge the twelve tribes of the royal people who were to be pre-eminent among the nations. When were these thrones to be set up? Their master, who used to distress them by talk of coming sufferings and indignities, had himself said that all was finished—his labours and humiliations were for ever past. Did anything yet remain to defer the revelation of his glory and their own promotion? So they reverently asked, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' By his answer Christ taught them that it was their business to perform the duties assigned to them, and not to trouble themselves about times or seasons. Whether the period of Israel's restoration was at hand, or whether it was to be long delayed, was a matter kept strictly by the Father in His own power, and unrevealed as yet to any created being. But neither uncertainty nor delay need trouble the apostles; they should be abundantly satisfied with the honours in store for them, and with the important functions that should fall to their lot. And very shortly they should receive from above that which should render them

more mighty than any earthly ruler or judge, for they should be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost. They should rejoice in possession of the highest honour that could be conferred on men—that of being the personally appointed witnesses of Christ, not only in Jerusalem and Judæa and Samaria, but in all habitable parts of the earth.

Here we see again the wisdom we have so often had to note. The last lesson Christ personally taught his apostles was one which their history proves they never forgot. The foundations of the church would not have been securely laid if they had. And perhaps its rising and falling fortunes in succeeding ages may have in great measure followed the way in which Christ's ministers have or have not acted on the principle that the future should be left to God; and that to the true-hearted pastors of the flock abundant compensation for the delay or deprivation of worldly honours will surely come in the blessing attending a faithful discharge of the highly honourable duties to which they are called.

And thus, in the discharge of his own great work, encouraging his chosen ones and imparting instructions for their successors to all generations, it is recorded that Christ himself was engaged even to the very moment when the cloud appeared in which he was to ascend, and he saw that the time was come to leave off teaching here. Instantly, then, he is said to have lifted up his hands in loving benediction; and when the last solemn tones of the Master's voice were heard, he was being carried up out of their sight.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUMMARY.

WE have now, I believe, had before us all the sayings of Christ recorded in the gospels. They present an accumulated amount of evidence which it may be convenient for us at the commencement of this summary to review unhampered with the explanatory matter which necessarily occupied the first place in order in the sections of the preceding chapter.

In the subjoined annotation, made with the object just stated, I have omitted all reference to what is found in the fourth gospel; and have taken account only of the words of Christ recorded in the first three. And, at this stage of our proceedings, I assume that the reports furnished by the three synoptists are substantially true. For both the omission and the assumption I will hereafter give some reasons.

But I must now explain how my review of the evidence that has been put in is to be conducted. It will have been observed that the sections containing it in the foregoing chapter were all of them numbered. The numbers that will be found below will correspond with those of the said sections. And under each heading number I intend to note concisely—

Firstly, what is *proved*, *shown*, or *displayed*;

Secondly, what is *claimed* or *asserted*,

by the words of Christ, with reference to his nature and character, in each indicated section.

Here, then, are my annotations ; which I hope will be found as faithful as it is my object to make them.

1. *Proved*: Independence, the quality of prompt decision. *Shown*: A true human nature, recognising its need of mental instruction and training. *Claimed*: Super-human relationship to the Father.

2. *Proved*: Wisdom and prudence. *Claimed* (by acceptance of the Baptist's words): The eminence attributed to him by John.

3. *Proved*: Enduring fortitude, wisdom, foresight, and readiness ; all under circumstances of bodily exhaustion and mental perplexity.

4.)
 5.)
 6.) (From St. John.)
 7.)
 8.)

9. *Claimed*: Supreme importance for the new dispensation through himself, as the development of all previous systems of divine government.

10. (From St. John.)

11. *Proved*: Thorough impartiality and disregard of personal feelings which would interfere with his work and plan. And great courage. *Asserted*: A claim to be the promised deliverer of Israel, and anointed by the Spirit of God.

12. *Proved*: Power to attract men to himself even at the cost of all they had. Consciousness of ability to direct their future course.

13. *Proved*: Consciousness of power over the world of spirits. And wisdom.

14. *Proved*: Devotion to his Father's business. And resolution in overcoming temptations to ease and self-complacency.

15. *Proved*: Wonderful ability, eloquence, and know-

ledge. Independence with regard to the mighty and influential. Sympathy for the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. Independence of the common opinions of the multitude then around him. Faculty to compose a universally suitable form of prayer. *Claimed*: Authority to give his own interpretation to God's law and to lay down law himself. Power, as the future judge of all, to admit men into the kingdom of heaven, and to exclude therefrom.

16. *Proved*: Ready compassion, wisdom, prudence, reverence for God's ordinances, consciousness of power, indifference to applause.

17. *Proved*: Compassion. Consciousness of power over all that affects man's constitution. *Claimed*: The right to do that which his audience correctly considered that God alone could do.

18. *Proved*: Independence of popular opinion. Discernment of character. Astonishing influence over the human mind.

19. (From St. John.)

20. *Proved*: Determination in protecting his own followers. Discretion in his manner of doing so. Discernment of the secret principles on which the law of God was founded. *Claimed*: A greatness above that of the temple; a lordship over the Sabbath itself. The perfection of the human nature of himself as the representative of mankind, the Son of man.

21. *Proved*: Consummate wisdom. Compassion. Consciousness of power.

22. *Shown*: Bold defiance and denunciation of oppression and of arrogant wealth. Courage, energy, and faithfulness in prophetic warnings. *Claimed*: Authority.

23. *Shown*: Ready benevolence, and consciousness of his own power. Human feelings of surprise. Knowledge of God's designs respecting the Gentiles. Resolution in announcing unpleasant truths.

24. *Shown*: Tenderness, compassion, and consciousness of power to raise the dead.

25. *Shown*: Companionable sociability combined with superiority to all the ordinary rules and conventionalities which usually guide men in their friendships. *Claimed*: Infinite supereminence for his own system or dispensation.

26. *Claimed*: A dignity so exalted that those cities which were indifferent to his works must fare worse than Sodom, or than Tyre and Sidon. The possession of power over all things. A knowledge of the Father unattainable by any besides himself. Power to impart the knowledge of God. The possession of a nature incomprehensible by any but the Father. Meekness and lowliness, and power to give rest to the souls of the weary and heavy-laden who should accept his invitation. Authority to teach them, and to apportion their work at his will.

27. *Shown*: Power of engaging affection. Knowledge of the circumstances of a person's life. Wisdom and dignity. *Claimed*: Power to forgive sin. The position of one to whom self-righteous persons and sinners are all debtors. *Asserted*: The necessity of faith in himself personally and the acceptableness of the love of sinners for himself personally.

28. *Shown*: Wisdom and graceful readiness. *Claimed*: The position of one whose actions were guided by the Holy Ghost, and whose teaching was the Word of God.

29. *Shown*: Boldness in denunciation. Disregard to the feelings of dearest relations when they would interfere with his work. Condescension, and tender regard to his humble and faithful followers. *Claimed*: A greatness above that of the old prophets and most wise and powerful of kings.

30. *Proved*: Wisdom, readiness, and wonderful ability.

31. *Proved*: Same as in preceding section. *Claimed*: The position of one who is the sower of all the good seed

cast into the great field of the world, who is the master of angels and the final rectifier of the condition of men.

32. *Proved*: A foreknowledge of the way in which his gospel would grow.

33. *Shown*: Complete insight into men's characters and capabilities. Arbitrary exaction when the claims of his kingdom were at stake.

34. *Proved*: Perfect confidence in his power over nature in its wildest force. *Asserted*: The supreme importance of his own existence; and the necessity of personal faith in himself.

35. *Proved*: Consciousness of power over demons. Wisdom and compassion.

36. *Proved*: Wisdom and compassion. *Claimed*: The dignity and prerogatives of 'the Bridegroom.'

37. *Proved*: Consciousness of power to heal, and of power to raise the dead, to give sight to the blind. Compassion and mercy. *Claimed*: The title of 'the Son of David.'

38. *Proved*: Insight into human nature. Power of putting words in short forcible sentences which fix themselves in man's memory and become an everlasting heritage for those who love his cause.

39. *Proved*: Wisdom. *Claimed*: Paramount authority and the position of one to whom the entire devotedness of man is due.

40. *Proved*: Either care for the bodies and minds of his apostles after a period of excitement, or the indulgence of a refined and delicate human feeling existing in himself personally. Afterwards, confidence in his own miraculous powers. Then the exercise of power and authority over his disciples and the thousands of people round him. The love of order and frugality combined with wisdom in demonstrating the substantial reality of his miracle.

41. *Proved*: Confidence in his own power. Ability to

inspire those around him with confidence in himself. The efficacy of implicit faith in himself personally.

42. (From St. John.)

43. *Shown*: Boldness in denouncing the Pharisees to their faces. Authority and wisdom in sweeping away men's noxious traditions and in enunciating and upholding the principles of reason and the spirituality of the laws of God.

44. *Proved*: Determination to proceed in the way specially marked out for him. Disinclination to go out of that course to soothe the feelings of any one. Yet, in sovereign independence of all rules, power to go beyond the bounds assigned, on the requisition of strong personal faith in himself.

45. *Proved*: Confidence in his own power; and determination that no difficulties should hinder its exercise.

46. *Proved*: Compassion and care for the bodily wants of those who came to hear him. Confidence in his own power.

47. *Shown*: Human feeling of disappointment and grief at the perversity of certain men. Wisdom in guarding against temptation to objectless personal display. Foreknowledge of what was to happen to him. Candour towards friends as well as foes. *Claimed*: Implicit faith in himself personally.

48. (No particular observation to make.)

49. *Shown*: Penetrating knowledge of character, and superhuman foreknowledge of events. *Asserted*: The very high importance of his own work and office and the necessity of the Father's intervention before they could be revealed to any man. *Claimed*: The power to construct a church impregnable to the assaults of this earth or of the unseen world. The possession of the keys of heaven; and power to commit them to whose keeping he would.

50. *Shown*: Determined character and resolute stead-

fastness. Disregard to his own comfort and ease, and also to the feelings and anticipations of others, when consideration for them would tend to interfere with his great work. Candour to the people and to his disciples. *Claimed*: The dignity of a future coming in the glory of the Father, and power to judge mankind hereafter.

51. *Shown*: Forgetfulness of self and tenderness for his followers in a moment of sudden and majestic exaltation. Readiness to return immediately from heavenly splendour, and inconceivably glorious communion, to earthly work and ordinary fellowship with mankind.

52. *Shown*: Quickness in taking up the cause of his friends. Candid consideration in allowing that difficulties opposed the efforts of his disciples. *Asserted*: The necessity of faith in himself personally both on the part of one who would receive a benefit from him and of those who would work efficiently in his cause.

53. *Proved*: A determination by repeated declarations to commit himself to sufferings and death. Foreknowledge of the things to be done to him. Wisdom in forewarning his disciples of them.

54. *Shown*: Knowledge of something that had happened out of his sight. Confidence in his power over nature. *Claimed*: The dignity of being the Son of God—a direct relationship to Him who is emphatically the King.

55. *Proved*: Earnestness in insisting on forbearance; kindness and consideration for the welfare of others. Candour in warning his disciples of fiery trials to come. *Asserted*: The dignity and importance of his work, and the paramount efficacy of his presence. *Claimed*: A knowledge of that which is done in heaven.

56. *Proved*: Readiness and ability. *Claimed*: A knowledge of the mind of God.

57. *Shown*: A spirit of toleration. Considerate readiness to accept any honestly intended service.

58. Vide Section XXXIX.

59.)
 60.) (From St. John.)
 61.)
 62.)

63. *Claimed*: Inherent ability of giving power to his immediate followers over noxious things. A nature unfathomable by any but God. Yet, at the same time, power to impart the knowledge of the Father to man. Also an inherent greatness, giving superiority to the privileges of his disciples over those enjoyed by any of the prophets and kings of bygone days.

64. *Shown*: Discretion and consummate ability. The power of enforcing Christian principles whilst repulsing an insidious attack.

65. *Shown*: Preference to a steady performance of his own peculiar work when that and a courteous exhibition of delicate feeling were for a moment presented as alternatives. *Claimed*: Power to give that which could never be taken away.

66. *Proved*: Readiness to attend to the requests of his followers. Authority in teaching. Power of illustration. *Claimed*: Knowledge of the mind of God.

67. *Shown*: Disregard of the courteous conventionalities of society when an observance of them would tend to suppress for a moment the flow of his instructions. Courage and force of character. Disregard to his own personal safety in the utterance of stinging denunciations against hypocrites in places of power.

68. *Shown*: Authority in teaching. *Claimed*: Power of conferring honour before the angels of God on those who should confess him before men.

69. *Shown*: Wisdom in determining against the acceptance of earthly distinctions and temporal authority. Eloquence, ability, readiness, and authority. Sensitive human

feelings. *Claimed*: Knowledge with respect to the principles on which future judgment would be conducted.

70. *Shown*: Superiority to common prejudices. Courage in advertising the people of what was to happen to their nation. Ability and power of illustration.

71. *Shown*: Consciousness of power. Independence of all prescribed rules, and freedom from all restrictions in the mode of carrying on his work. Wisdom and readiness. Perfect confidence in the gradual but certain progress and establishment of his kingdom.

72. *Shown*: Candour and courage in telling unpleasant truths. Foreknowledge of the acceptance of his gospel by the Gentiles.

73. *Shown*: Penetration in unfolding the secret wishes of a man who had never seen him. Courageous determination not to be baffled by menace. *Claimed*: Power that no mere human being could have exercised.

74. *Shown*: Benevolence and independence of bearing; and assumption of authority in the society of the great. A degree of forwardness interdicted to his followers. Readiness, wisdom, and foresight.

75. *Shown*: Resolution, candour, and determination in placing before the multitudes considerations as distasteful to them as those which he had just before insisted on had been to their superiors.

76. *Shown*: Encouraging kindness to penitents who had been looked upon as utterly lost. Wisdom and readiness of illustration.

77. *Shown*: Wisdom. Genius of the highest order, and power of illustration. Consciousness of authority to declare and vindicate the ways of God.

78. *Shown*: Wonderful readiness and masterly power of illustration. Authority and courage.

79. *Shown*: Foresight. Carefulness in methods of instruction. *Asserted*: An absolute claim to the fruits of his servants' labours.

80. *Shown*: Determined resistance to the worldly spirit of self-importance and revenge. Renewed self-devotedness.

81. *Shown*: An appreciation of gratitude, and a desire for the love of those saved by him. *Claimed*: A pre-eminent dignity, requiring the postponement of the formalities enjoined by the law to the offering of a grateful homage to himself. *Asserted*: The primary importance of faith in himself.

82. *Shown*: Accurate foresight and penetration. *Asserted*: The surpassing importance of the 'day of the Son of man.'

83. *Shown*: Wisdom and power of illustration. Habit of looking forward to his future coming, and regarding things as they will appear then.

84. *Shown*: Wisdom and power of illustration. Comprehension of what would be felt in the hearts of his humble followers from the time of the establishment of Christianity to the present day.

85. }
86. } (From St. John.)
87. }

88. *Shown*: Authority in teaching. Great discretion and good sense. *Claimed*: Power to supersede regulations found in the law of Moses.

89. *Shown*: Love to the young, even to very infants. Authority in teaching. *Asserted*: Claim to the submissive trust, unquestioning docility, and child-like affection of the members of his kingdom. Power to communicate benefits by his touch, even to the youngest children.

90. *Shown*: Authority in teaching. The feelings of a truly human heart. *Claimed*: Power to give heavenly and eternal riches and posts of highest dignity to those who faithfully followed him.

91. (From St. John.)

92. *Shown*: Foreknowledge of the extreme bitterness of the cup he had to drink, and of the baptism of blood

that he had to be baptised with. Considerateness and patience with his disciples. *Asserted*: That his own life was of such transcendent worth that it would be found sufficiently precious to be accepted as a ransom for many [the multitudes of the human race].

93. *Shown*: Compassion. Confidence in his own power. Acceptance of the title of 'the Son of David.' Approval of faith in himself personally.

94. *Shown*: The authority of one who is not to be disobeyed. The power of obtaining what adherents he would and of bringing them under his own influence by engaging the homage of their hearts. Power exerted over the mind of man in the cause of justice and goodness. *Claimed*: Power to save the lost.

95. *Shown*: Resolution and candour. *Claimed*: Right to the entire services of his followers. Power to reward and punish at his coming.

96. *Proved*: Kindness in vindicating a loving act. Power of predicting what should occur on his death, and what should be recorded afterwards throughout the world. *Claimed*: Worthiness of the most costly honours that could be paid to his person.

97. *Shown*: Knowledge of what was in existence at a place out of sight. *Claimed*: The title of 'the Lord' (or else the supreme importance of his own proceedings). Right to the homage of men.

98. *Proved*: Participation in the feelings of human nature. Prescience, boldness, and readiness. *Asserted*: The application to himself of passages in the Psalms addressed to God.

99. (From St. John.)

100. *Shown*: Disregard of the appearance of harshness in his words and actions when a worthy end was to be obtained. Confidence in his power over nature.

101. (From St. John.)

102. *Shown*: The thoroughness and fulness characterising his instructions, and the carefulness with which he cautioned his followers. *Claimed*: Authority to declare the will of God.

103. *Proved*: Astonishing readiness and ability.

104. *Proved*: Boldness in warning the Jews of their rejection by God. Foresight of what should befall himself and them. *Asserted*: Claim to be the one, well-beloved Son of God, to be the head corner-stone, to be the stone which should break to pieces and grind to powder.

105. *Shown*: Wonderful readiness, and mental and spiritual power. *Asserted*: Claim to be David's Lord, who should have all enemies placed under his footstool.

106. *Shown*: Intrepidity in exposing guilt and hypocrisy. Astonishing powers in the righteous exercise of vituperative denunciation. *Claimed*: A value for his blood above that of all the righteous ever before slain. Foreknowledge of what shall happen to the Jews ages hence.

107. *Proved*: Appreciation of self-denying acts. Readiness in turning to good account every occasion of qualifying his disciples.

108. *Proved*: Power of foretelling some things, then unlikely, which have since occurred. The reality of his human nature. *Claimed*: Power to inspire his followers with wisdom after his departure. *Asserted*: The transcendent importance of his own words.

109. *Proved*: Wonderful ability. Accurate foreknowledge of what should characterise the Christian Church.

110. *Shown*: Wonderful powers of description. Condescension. *Claimed*: Title of the king of all the nations. Glory in his future coming as the Son of man.

111. *Proved*: Human feeling of desire for sympathy. Affection to the disciples. Confidence in his own power to establish the kingdom of God.

112. (Part from St. John.) *Shown*: Patience under the provoking ambition and miserable disputes of the disciples. Determination to persevere in his work and to face his shortly-impending sufferings. Assured certainty felt of future power to allot places at his table and throne. Self-possession and commanding influence, even over Judas.

113. (Part from St. John.) *Shown*: Foreknowledge of Peter's denial. Magnanimity and love to his weak disciples. *Asserted*: Efficacy of his own intercession with God.

114. *Shown*: Confidence in the stupendous results of his appearance and work in the flesh. The inherent faculty of imparting an energetic efficacy to a rite of the utmost simplicity. Power of directing the minds and actions of his followers then present, and of those that have succeeded them to this day, and of ordaining a thing obediently observed among all the most civilised nations now existing.

115. *Shown*: Candour and wisdom. (Greater part from St. John.)

116. (From St. John.)

117. *Shown*: Kind consideration for the future comfort and for the establishment of the faith of his disciples. Foresight. Candour.

118. *Shown*: Susceptibility of terror. And other genuine proofs of a thoroughly natural human constitution of body and mind. Mental oppression. Shrinking at the approach of the power of darkness. A desire for retirement in time of great trouble, yet a yearning for the sympathy of a tried friend. Readiness in finding excuses for a companion's failures, yet faithfulness in cautioning. Thorough self-possession at last, and undaunted bravery.

119. *Proved*: Perfect self-possession and highest courage in the face of a hostile human force. Care for

his friends. Consideration for one of his enemies. Strong human sensitiveness to ignominious treatment.

120. *Proved*: Calmness, moderation, and self-possession.

121. *Proved*: First, wisdom combined with discretion; then, wisdom combined with courage for the truth. Resolution in the discharge of a most solemn act, and the utterance of an irrevocable avowal before the representative Council of his people. *Claimed*: Future glory and divine power. Messiahship. Right to the title of the Son of God.

122. (Part from St. John.) *Shown*: Great powers of human constitution, and courage. Foreknowledge of what was to happen after his departure.

123. *Shown*: Nobleness of mind. The reality and intensity of his physical and mental sufferings. Powers of bodily endurance, and of memory in the midst of overwhelming agonies. Reassertion, even in the depth of humiliation, of right to dispose of places in an unseen, happy state. Comfort and satisfaction at the completion of a perfect work. Cheerful confidence at the last in his Father. *Asserted*: The voluntariness of his death. A claim to be the fulfilment of prophecy. (Remaining parts from St. John.)

124. (From St. John.)

125. *Shown*: Wise and kind thoughtfulness, and (*probably*) human feelings of pleasurable anticipation.

126. *Shown*: Wisdom, discretion, and kind condescension. Power over men's hearts and minds. Solicitude for the establishment of the disciples' faith. Power of veiling his personality in the risen state.

127. *Proved*: Reality of his human nature, and identity of his risen body with that in which he had been crucified. Kindness. Condescension. Solicitude for the establishment of the apostles' faith. Authority. Power

of being present in his risen body at what places he would. (Remaining parts from St. John.)

128. }
129. } (From St. John.)

130. *Shown*: Considerateness in soothing disquietude of the perplexed. *Authority. Claimed*: Authority extending beyond the time then present. All power in heaven and earth. Equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The faculty of being present with his disciples for ages after his departure from earth. Power to invest them with miraculous gifts and immunities.

131. *Proved*: Wisdom. *Claimed*: The power of guaranteeing the help of the Holy Ghost; and authority to regulate the future functions of his apostles and their successors on earth.

It may be convenient, before we proceed further, to make a few remarks on some of the *Things Proved*, and on some of the *Claims Asserted*, according to the record of Christ's words found in the three synoptic gospels.

We will take first some of the things *proved* by Christ's words with respect to his character and nature.

At the head of these must be put the *Genuineness of His Human Nature*. This comes into view in our very first section, and reappears as plainly in many others. Before attaining maturity, he fully perceived that increase in wisdom was as needful for the perfection of his mind as increase in stature was for his body; and like every one ardent in pursuit of knowledge, he availed himself of all the means that came within reach for getting instruction. Afterwards, we find him exhibiting the human feelings of surprise; of pain in the contemplation of sufferings, even when he knew they were deserved; of desire for the love of those benefited by him; of sensitiveness to injurious

treatment ; of intense longing for friendly sympathy when in distress ; of depression of spirit and overwhelming apprehension in the prospect of agony before him ; and of an earnest wish to escape if his grand object could be accomplished without enduring it. And after he had risen from the dead, some of his words plainly indicate the real materiality of his resurrection-body. It consisted of 'flesh and bones,' and was capable of receiving food. It is hardly necessary to insist on many common and obvious proofs of the real manhood of Christ, or of the fact that one of the conditions of his existence here necessarily rendered him, as a creature, inferior to the Creator. There is one thing, however, that should not be passed over without notice, and that is the evidence we find of the strength of Christ's bodily constitution before his death. After all his sufferings in Gethsemane and continued ill-treatment throughout a sleepless night, he was able to stand self-possessed before Pilate, then before Herod, and, after the fatigue of being marched to and from that Jewish tyrant, before Pilate again. Then, after he had been cruelly beaten, mocked, and scourged, and had heard his sentence to a dreadful death, and carried his cross, or part of it, some distance, he had power and voice enough to make an address in open air to a number of women. Then, after the first shock and pain of crucifixion, he had strength to utter some most weighty words, and after hanging on the cross for six hours, he was able to cry out with a loud voice.

I would next call attention to his *Wisdom*. It must have been remarked how often this word has appeared in the preceding annotations. I would include under this head the perfection of his mental qualities, his wonderful readiness in every sudden emergency, his marvellous judgment and discretion, his practice of choosing the most suitable weapons for use in defence or attack when

engaged with his adversaries ; his genius, and eloquence, and powers of illustration, his discernment of character ; the ascendancy he exercised over men, and his perfect good sense. We find no failure whatever on Christ's part in any of these particulars. Whether with friends or enemies, whether teaching, rebuking, exhorting, or comforting, his words are faultless. We might have thought his denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees too exasperating ; but the event proved that he knew how far he could go, for his enemies did not take him till his hour was come.

In connection with these particulars, we may note the wonderful *Power* possessed by Christ of *Uttering Words that Fix themselves in the Memories of millions of men*—one may say, indeed, of all civilised men—high and low, rich and poor. Now, there were two great sages living in the days of Christ, known in vastly more influential circles in their lifetime than Christ was, and who, I cannot help thinking, were raised up by God to prepare the minds of 'the dispersion' of the Jews in the one case, and of the Gentile world in the other, for the reception of Christianity. But who, not a very learned man, knows anything whatever about their words ? Who among the multitudes ever quotes a pithy saying of Philo's, or a proverbial sentence of Seneca's ? It may be said, and very fairly, that this is because Christ's words are more read than theirs. But why are they ?

We see also his *Foreknowledge of many Things* that have taken place, though they must have seemed very improbable at the time he spoke. I might point to his predictions about his sufferings and manner of death, and about the destruction of the temple, but I prefer to rest my case on the perfectly accurate touches in his pictures of the future church, for these things can be verified, not only by the student of ecclesiastical history, but by any observer of

what is going on at the present day. The power of foretelling some future events carries with it no proof of the divinity of the predictor, but it may go very far in establishing the claims he has to make.

Next we may notice one or two things in connection with his *Thorough Devotion to The Work* which he had set before himself. One is his *Indifference to the Personal Feelings* which his social and affectionate nature would have led him to indulge with respect to his relations and the townsmen among whom he had been brought up. But the latter he treated with no more partiality than his other fellow-countrymen; and we know how rigidly he repulsed his mother and brethren when attention to them would in the least degree have interfered with his labours. And then, when occasion demanded it, we find more than once a complete *Sacrifice of Delicacy of Feeling*, and an extraordinary *Disregard of the Courtesies of Society*. A zealous disciple, who cared for his master's ease, he scrupled not to call 'Satan.' Instead of making himself agreeable at a certain entertainment, he took upon himself to lecture the host and his fellow-guests. He rebuked a kind-hearted woman who was zealously busying herself for his comfort. He refused permission to one man to go and bury his father, and to another to bid his relations farewell. I do not mean to say that the things I have pointed out were congenial to the feelings of Christ. They are rather proofs that his whole ministerial life was a self-sacrifice. That they plainly appear from his words cannot be denied; and it would be wrong in one who writes of his character not to notice them.

I must now mention his *Courage*. This was a quality he showed in the highest degree. Without it he could not at twelve years old have separated himself from his friends and gone into the midst of the revered doctors of the temple. And during his public life, what courage he

displayed again and again in his denunciations of the upper or influential classes of Jewish society ! How energetically he accused them, not in private, but to their faces ! How boldly he spoke in presence of the awful Sanhedrim ; undaunted, though he knew his words were the sentence of death against himself ! And he was equally courageous in the face of multitudes of the lower classes. He failed not in faithfulness to tell them unwelcome truths, which to utter was to turn their friendship into enmity. And we must notice his *Fortitude* and oft-expressed resolution to go through, and endure, all the dreadful things and excruciating pains allotted to him. He never concealed from himself what his course would lead to ; and though the thorough completion of his work required him at times to move out of the way of immediate and useless danger, he never ceased to press forward on the road that led to humiliation, agony, and death. I cannot recognise any justice whatever in remarks I have often seen made on Christ's behaviour just before his betrayal and crucifixion. People go so far as to say sometimes that many a feeble saint, many a poor martyr, has gone forth to meet torture and death with greater calmness and courage than Christ showed on entering upon his last sufferings. I find nothing whatever in the gospels that could justify such expressions. The sore amazement, the heaviness, the state of exceeding sorrowfulness, were ingredients at the top of the mixture in the cup put into his hands when entering Gethsemane, and he knew what the dregs were composed of. It is true that he prayed that he might be spared from drinking them if his work could be accomplished, and if his Father's will for man's salvation could be carried out, by any other means. He was a human being, loving mental and bodily agony for their own sakes no better than any one of ourselves. The very bravest man will, unless

perfectly infatuated, avoid such things if he can fulfil his duties without submitting to them. And Christ showed the most exalted courage and intrepidity; for when convinced that the bitter potion could not be avoided without detriment to his work, he hesitated not an instant—‘If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Father, Thy will be done!’ The agony, that commenced with the amazement and heaviness, was then allowed free course, and came to its acme in the garden. There is a mystery about the nature of the terrible conflict then waged—a thick darkness; which, as I before ventured to hint, the gospels shed not one ray of light strong enough to penetrate. So we shall never understand more than this—that it was too much for the perfection of human nature to bear. Yet, prostrate as even the Son of man had been under it, Christ went forth immediately afterwards courageously to expose himself to his human foes and torturers; to stand before the high priest, and to receive sentence from the Roman governor.

We must next speak of the *Authority with which He Taught*. It is evident, not only from the general tenour of the history, but from the disputations between Christ and the scribes and Pharisees, that he had never been through a course of rabbinical training. It was a perfectly understood thing that he had not been sent forth by any authorised body of men to teach. Yet we see him as a young man of about thirty, reared amongst the respectable rather than the upper classes of a provincial district, taking upon himself to require the attention, not only of untutored Galileans, but of the influential inhabitants of Jerusalem, to his instructions. And then these instructions had a great peculiarity of their own. What struck men so particularly in them was that they were positive and original—not at all like what the Jews were accustomed to get from the learning of their rabbis, which was

exhibited very much in repeating and commenting on the sayings of other venerated sages. Christ's teaching was in no wise founded on what others had said before him. On the contrary, he upset their declarations and interspersed his own with the words, 'But I say unto you.' On his sole authority he took upon himself to explain the Mosaic law—to extend it by bringing the thoughts within its grasp, to declare the mind of God in framing it, to assert that certain parts had become obsolete, to promulgate laws of his own which should be of equal force to the Mosaic code as long as any part of that remained unfulfilled, and which should survive it when its every jot and tittle should have been accomplished in himself. Moreover, he threatened men and cities with utter ruin for inattention to his words and deeds. Can we wonder that he was asked, 'Who gave thee this authority?'

In connection with this consideration we may notice Christ's *Sovereign Independence of all Rules*, even of those which he himself laid down for the observance of his followers. This frequently appears in the records of his words, but it will suffice to point to one example—the opprobrious names which he gave to the Pharisees and scribes. Yet, while he treated them as implacable enemies to his cause, his *Spirit of Toleration* towards the sincere and earnest, but imperfectly instructed, was remarkable. So also was his *Ardour in Inculcating Forgiveness Forbearance, and Kindness*, and his *Readiness in Appreciating Acts of Self-denial*.

We should not overlook his *Consciousness of Power over the Spiritual and Natural Worlds*; his *Confidence of Final Success*; and his *Trust in his Father*. We must note also his *Considerateness and Patience*, his *Benevolent Pity for the Fallen*, his *Tenderness to Infants*, his *Nobleness of Mind*, and his *Love of Order and Frugality*.

By what we ourselves see to the present day, it is

obvious that he possessed and exercised the *Power of Ordaining a Rite* that has continued more than eighteen hundred years, and seems likely to be observed as long as civilisation shall last.

There are yet two important things to be noticed—the spirit of *Self-sacrifice* shown by Christ from the first to the last of his utterances, and his *Habit of Claiming to be some Great One*.

And this naturally brings us to the notice of some of Christ's prominent *Claims* and *Assertions* concerning himself.

At the head of these must be put his claim to *Relationship with the Father*, in a sense different from that in which other men, or other Israelites or Jews, or the members of his own church, could be said to enjoy it. His first recorded words are an assertion of this relationship; and further allusions to it, more or less plain, are found in his sayings from time to time, until the unqualified declaration was made on solemn oath before the high priest that he was the Son of God. And the official ruler of his people and all the Sanhedrim certainly understood him to declare that he was equal with God—that is, that he was God. But even if this had not been recorded, we find by the first three gospels that Christ said so many things of himself that could be truly said of God only, that we should have been forced to admit that he claimed to be divine. How else, for instance, could he have taken on himself to forgive sins, in the face of the remark that God only had power to do that? How else could he have asserted his own ability and right to unfold the designs of God? to reveal the Father to whomsoever he would, although his own nature remained incomprehensible? to supersede the law? to demand the entire devotion of men? to declare that his own teaching was the word of God? to exercise lordship over the Sabbath? to give rest

to all the weary and heavy-laden who would come to him? to apply to himself words in the Psalms most plainly addressed to God? to declare himself the central object of all the announcements of ancient Scripture? to overrule all things? to inspire his disciples with wisdom, and to be present with them after his own removal from the world? to represent himself as so great that, if men failed to praise him, inanimate nature would cry out? to be the rectifier of man's final condition? to claim a seat on the Father's throne? to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven? to be equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost?

In terms equally explicit does Christ declare himself to be '*the Son of Man.*' In this character he asserts himself to be the *Bridegroom*, the *Master of Angels*, the *King of Nations*, the *Saviour* of the lost, the *Judge* of men, the *Christ of God*. Though he was *God's Servant and Man's Minister* in his humiliation as a creature, yet he was the *Heir* of all things, the *Master* finally invested with absolute power to take account of all those to whom he had committed a charge. The term '*Son of man*' means in his mouth the Representative of Mankind; if first in service and suffering, pre-eminent in dignity also; the foremost of all in wisdom, goodness, and strength; the perfect Man. He was fitted to judge, because he knew by his own experience how hard temptation was to endure; fitted to intercede, because personally acquainted with man's wants.

He allowed himself also to be called *the Son of David*; and, by accepting the honours of that title, virtually asserted a claim to be the King foretold by the prophets, the royal seed promised to David in the Psalms. His early followers must have understood his claims in this sense, otherwise two of the Evangelists would not have been at the pains to collect the extracts they severally give from genealogies existing in their times. For either one of the two different lists made use of by them puts

the matter in a way that would be quite satisfactory to the Jews of their days; if not to us, who would rather look to Mary's than to Joseph's descent. But those old Jews saw things in a different light. The name of Joseph was inscribed on their rolls as Christ's father; and Mary was Joseph's wife. Thus, even supposing her of the tribe of Levi,* Christ's legal claims as an heir of David would not have been invalidated.

We find by Christ's words also that he asserted himself to be the *Deliverer of Israel*, the *Anointed of the Spirit*, and that he claimed *Power over Evil Demons*, power to *Raise the Dead*, power to *Render Deadly Poisons Innocuous* to his immediate followers, power to communicate bodily blessings by his touch, and blessings more than temporal, I think, by the laying on of his hands, power to give what could never be taken away, power, in fine, over all things.

He also asserted his own *Worthiness of the Most Costly Honours*, and his *Right to the Fruits of all His Servants' Labours*. And he claimed *Submission* and trust from men as a father does from his children.

But in the midst of all these exacting claims we find Christ asserting himself to be *Meek and Lowly* in heart. And thus we have a wonderfully complex nature revealed to us by Christ's words; for in many of them there are things which we could never have expected from the mouth of a meek and lowly man. It is well, therefore, that we have this explicit declaration. For we are not now contemplating Christ's deeds of love and mercy—the miracles of his patience and bounty. We are reviewing Christ's words. And in them I confess I find but few that proclaim the

‘Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,’

* I am not affirming that she was. But her relation Elizabeth was clearly of the family of Aaron.

whom our little children are taught to sing. Sternness rather than meekness, self-assertion rather than lowliness, are the characteristics that strike one in his sayings to his countrymen in general, and even to his loved disciples; whilst contemptuous daring, and unmeasured and irritating reproach, distinguish Christ's language to the dominant classes. Yet I believe the words 'meek and lowly' are as faithful a translation as any that can be found in our New Testament, and our pastors often remind us very properly how Peter describes Christ as not reviling and not threatening. I suppose Christ meant that though the requirements of his kingdom were inexorable, and oppressive hollowness and hypocrisy demanded the severest invective from the originator of a new dispensation, yet the weary and heavy-laden need not fear. Whatever his words might be, he was in his heart meek and lowly towards them, as he was in effect to the young children whom he blessed. And, after all, Peter does not say that Christ never reviled or threatened; only that *when he was reviled*, he reviled not again; *when he suffered*, he threatened not. And this is exactly what we find in the accounts of Christ's sufferings and crucifixion.

One more thing we have particularly to notice among the claims to be found in Christ's words, and that is his *Exaction of Faith*—the extreme importance he attaches to *Faith in Himself Personally*. How he claimed this faith, and what efficacy he assigned to it, we have had several instances to show; and I might have brought them forward oftener still, had I not wished as much as possible to avoid repetition. But it is important to have a clear idea of what Christ meant by 'faith'; so in this summary we must refer a little to our notes touching this matter.

We find, then, that on some occasions he blamed followers because they had 'little faith;' for instance, the disciples in the boat during a storm; Peter on, or rather

in, the water ; and the disciples who had forgotten to take bread. Now at these times Christ could not have meant that they would have been saved respectively from drowning or from damage by poison or hunger, by faith in God as that Great Being who had revealed Himself to the Israelites by His name 'Jehovah,' whom we call 'God Almighty,' and the French, 'L'Éternel' and 'Le Bon Dieu;' for nothing can be more certain than that many men, with strong faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord of heaven and earth, have been allowed to suffer death from such agencies. Christ must have meant that those who were close to him, and acting under his orders, should have felt that they must be safe; because his own individual power, the virtue inherent in himself personally, must preserve both himself and those with him from all damage whatever, as long as such preservation was necessary for the success of his great undertaking.

Again, when he gave forgiveness and renewed health to the paralytic man, it was when he saw in the man's friends a certain faith, which was clearly not faith in the invisible God, because they might have fallen down in prayer before the Almighty without taking the trouble to remove the roof of a house, and to let down their almost lifeless burden at the feet of Christ. So also a poor diseased woman received a complete and sudden cure, not because she prayed to and believed on the God of Israel; but because she had faith so great in the virtue existing in Christ's person, that she was certain that a mere touch of his garment would bring the principle of health into her own body. And this kind of faith instead of being called superstitious was commended. So with the Gentile mother, and the woman that was a sinner, and the blind man, respecting whom it would be needless to repeat particulars; I say it was not faith in the God of the spirits

of all flesh, but faith in the individual Son of David, faith in the ardently loved person there present in the flesh, that was pronounced by Christ effective in the procural of the bodily, mental, and spiritual advantages obtained. The apostles evidently understood this, and acted on the idea after Christ's removal. 'Christ's name,' said Peter, 'through faith in his name'—not, remark, through faith in God—'hath made this cripple strong.' Thus they followed Christ; who, not only by commendation, but by direct precept, enforces the necessity of this faith; and the writers of the Epistles in the New Testament follow the founder of Christianity in this respect. We are saved by faith, we are told; faith is the principle which is efficacious in bringing forth good works. And the faith of a Christian is personal faith in Christ, or, to put it more plainly perhaps, faith in the person Christ.

It may be said we are now getting too far—we are examining the apostles' words and not Christ's. But if they held the keys of heaven, as Christ promised they should, their definition must help us to understand his meaning. What, then, is the 'faith' which the writers of the New Testament Epistles make out to be so vitally needful? Any moderately instructed Sunday-scholar would consider himself capable of clearing up this point in a moment, by answering, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for—the evidence of things not seen.' And how many times has not this answer been given to the entire satisfaction of both questioner and respondent, who perceive not that, standing by itself, it is a perfect paradox! The good child would be puzzled to show how a spiritual or mental quality or action can possibly be a substance; and how faith can be at all required when demonstration exists. And people with capacity above that of children often recite these well-known words about faith with as little idea of their meaning as a parrot accustomed to

practise articulation would have, that had been taught to gabble them over to us. And no wonder; for they are made obscure, as many other sentences in the New Testament are, by inefficient translation of the context, and ill-judged division of chapters. To be able to seize the sacred writer's meaning in Heb. xi. 1, we must go back to the last verse or two of the preceding chapter. We find him speaking there of the very thing we wish to know about—faith—and this he said was what would enable us to appropriate that for which (as Christ had told men) everything, even the natural life itself, ought to be sacrificed; viz., the saving or acquiring of the great objects of life. And the author of the Epistle declares in some words taken from the book of Habakkuk that this was to be done by faith—the just man he says would gain these objects by faith. Yet still, it is added, if he drew back God would have no pleasure in him. ‘But we,’* he continues, ‘we Christians do not draw back (literally, *are not of withdrawal*) unto destruction; but possess faith † (literally, *are of faith*) to the securing of (our) life. And (this) faith,’ he adds in the next chapter, ‘is—that which makes us confident (literally, *is a confidence* ‡) of things hoped for; a sure persuasion § (of the existence) of things unseen.’ I wish to make it perfectly clear that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes exactly the same view as

* ἡμεῖς.

† The point and connection are utterly lost by our unfortunate translation, ‘of them that believe to the saving of the soul.’

‡ ὑπόστασις, translated ‘confidence,’ 2 Cor. ix. 4, and xi. 17, and Heb. iii. 14. The word only appears in one other place in the New Testament, viz., in Heb. i. 3, where though it might more fairly have been rendered ‘substance’ than in our text, it is strangely translated ‘person.’ The words *χαρὰκτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ* may mean *the stamp* (expression, or manifestation) of His essential existence. A good general meaning of ὑπόστασις is ‘groundwork;’ and our text means that faith supplies good ground for our hope—regards our expectation of the things hoped for as well grounded, and thus influences our conduct in life.

§ ἐλεγχος, a conviction of the truth of a thing—a *being convinced*.

Christ does with regard to the relative value of things, seen and unseen. He maintains that if we want to save our lives (in the higher sense), we must be ready to lose our lives (in the lower sense)—to give up worldly ease, wealth, reputation, animal life-blood if required, to secure what is really man's life in Christ's estimation.

Now, what can enable us in these last days to do this? Nothing but faith—faith in Christ as our Protector, our Judge, our Rewarder, our King, who shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. This it will be seen is a very different thing from a mere belief that Christ existed, or does still exist. For I may believe in the existence of many men of whom I hear; I may actually behold many men about me in whom I can have no faith whatever. But an infant has faith in its mother; a merchant has faith in a good bill of exchange not yet come to maturity; and, though not of so perfect a kind as it is meant we should have in Christ, a Roman soldier had faith in Cæsar, an English man-of-war's man in Nelson. Was there a sailor in that hero's fleet who did not see a victory, a perfectly certain victory, before him in the last great battle, as soon as the message was signalled—'England expects every man to do his duty?' And Nelson's men did their duty, though their captain was mortal and fallible.

I have mentioned an illustration or two. But in a nobler sense and a surer degree the old worthies, from the time of righteous Abel to that of the valiant men and enduring women whose memories are enshrined in what we call the Apocrypha, faith showed itself in resistance to all that opposed the theocracy as established from time to time. Faith they had in their Divine King and Judge, who issued His decrees, and by turns corrected and delivered the people—faith in the excellence of God's law—faith in the ultimate supremacy of the holy nation—faith in a coming Deliverer. These sorely tried men and women

believed in the divinely established system under which they lived as necessary in its progressive developments for the wellbeing of their families, their tribes, and their nation. They believed in its final triumph by the actual, perhaps we might say personal, interposition of the Almighty. Therefore, sometimes with success and honour, but very often without getting the least individual benefit, they fought, they suffered the tortures of persecution, they died. And the sacred writer tells us our faith must be the same in kind as theirs. Only we have a more clearly defined object on which to fix it; and, as he reminds us, are in a much better position than they were. The theocratic systems in their several stages, for which these noble persons contended often unto blood, have served their purpose and so have been done away—have become obsolete. These worthies, faithful unto death, without us received not the promise. We, more favoured than they, are directed to look to one who is not only the beginner but the perfecter of faith.* But to this faith, the illustrations given by the sacred writer show that something was and always must be added, which the Apostle Peter denominates ‘virtue’ (*ἀρετή*). Without this quality faith would have been dead. But it was not dead in those whose grand deeds are recorded for our encouragement. For they maintained their faith by a valorous energy, which all the old heroes of faith possessed, though some of them exhibited it in a way that would seem strange to Christians of these days. Virtue, in the sense of self-denying, resolute devotion to that which is right and true, is always the same. But the right and true may be more clearly seen at one time than at another. In fact, what may be right under one set of circumstances may not be

* Heb. xii. 2. Not of ‘our faith,’ the unwarrantable translation in the Authorised Version, but ‘the faith’—that faith which the writer of the Epistle had been describing.

so under other contingencies. But self-devotion is always the accompaniment of genuine faith, and that is as essential now as it was in those days of old. What to us are the strange doings of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David? In modern language we could hardly call some of those characters religious men, but we can see what prompted the deeds which made them illustrious in sacred story. The energising principle which wrought in them, in circumstances comparatively unfavourable, ought to be much more effectual in us, who see what they saw not. Our earnest gaze is to be directed now, not to their strange doings, not even to the character of God as inadequately described by Old Testament writers, not to regulations framed for people as unlike Englishmen as men could possibly be; but to Christ himself as the manifestation of the Good, the Powerful, the Wise, and the Divine.

But I must not be misunderstood. I am very far from saying that we are not to cultivate the study of the Old Scriptures, which were written for our profit. We ought to note the records of God's dealings under gradually advancing dispensations, from the time of the first persecutor, Cain, to the days of the tyrant Antiochus; and to emulate these noble acts of patriarchs and true Israelites which were instigated by genuine faith. But the church is not now, nor ought it to be, in its childhood. The representations of the Almighty, which required Him to come down from His seat in a distant heaven before He could ascertain what was going on at the surface of the earth, are not for us. We are not to be addressed in the way that slaves, barbarians, idolaters, very properly were. From the time of the closing of the Baptist's ministry, or at all events from the wondrous Pentecost recorded in Acts, until now, all to whom the gospel is preached are required to have faith—faith, not in an abstract, ideal

God, but in the person Christ, who asserts his claim to be the revealer of God to us.*

Finally we must mark that Christ claims his right to the forgiven sinner's *Personal Love*.

I have now endeavoured to notice the principal things proved respecting Christ's nature and character, and to state the most obvious claims put forward by him, according to his words recorded in the first three gospels. I have heretofore confined myself to particulars; and though it would be difficult to fix the limits of an advantageous analysis, enough has probably been done in that way for our immediate purpose. But we can scarcely judge of a man's character solely by what he said on this or that occasion. We must survey the things we have had before us in the aggregate; and then a general impression with respect to Christ's teaching will be made on the mind, which it may be well to note before it grows too indistinct. To me it appears that that teaching was pre-eminently characterised by breadth and catholicity. Of what goes by the name of 'doctrine' in modern religious phraseology, I cannot find that the passages now brought forward as evidence give us anything at all. The word

* Indeed, the shrewdest observers of mankind find that what is wanted for engaging hearts in any great cause, is not so much the inculcation of the principles of a system as the attraction of an influential personal individuality. The Roman church has seized this truth and made the most of it, applying it in a way the Scriptures do not warrant, an assertion which I presume its adherents will not consider libellous in the least. Roman Catholics present their *Mary*, being wise enough in their generation to see that without this fascinating development of infallibility they would soon lose their hold on the multitudes who feel the want of a living, tender, divinely thoughtful friend, invested with the powers of heaven. Now I maintain that the Christ of the gospels, regarded with the faith of a Stephen, who saw him rise from his seat on the throne of God to receive a departing spirit, and of a Paul, who cried to him when his flesh was troubled, is all we want; and as much as the Roman Catholics can get of the blessed *Mary*.

itself is mentioned in the gospels, but then when applied to Christ, it simply means the instruction he gave, or his mode of imparting it. From nothing that proceeded from his mouth do we learn that it is necessary for a man to comprehend the counsels of God, to be able to state the exact scheme of salvation, or to detail plans and engagements severally made and entered into by and between the Three sacred Persons of an Eternal Trinity. Whilst Christ most certainly taught that he came to save the lost, and to give his life a ransom for many,* he never told men that they must know to the splitting of a hair the precise way in which the great Sacrifice became effectual. The main points in Christ's teaching are plain enough, and not hard to be understood. Repentance; filial trust in God; submission to the divine will; the duty of forgiveness; self-denial and love to one's neighbour; the efficacy of prayer; the danger of resisting God's Spirit; the indispensability of genuine, living faith in Christ as Saviour of the world and the manifestation of almighty power and goodness; the certainty of rewards exceeding all expectation for his faithful servants, and of tremendous punishment for the negligent, the unmerciful, and the wicked in the eternal state; and, lastly, the importance of a watchful anticipation of a second, personal, and more obviously glorious manifestation of God to men;—are not these the things that Christ insisted on? †

And where, throughout his teaching, shall we find anything akin to the utterances of a class of sincerely pious

* According to the best commentators, the *πολλῶν*, *many*, of Matthew and Mark is in the sense of the *πάντων*, *all*, of 1 Tim. ii. 6.

† Baptism and Holy Communion I rather mention in a note than in the text, because, although Christ certainly enjoined the one and instituted the other, it would appear from the synoptic gospels that he only spoke of them to the twelve. We do not find that he made them subjects of general teaching before the people. He seems to have left that to the apostles.

but narrow-minded men, who represent the Christian faith as a thing endangered by modern science; and insist on our receiving parts of the Old Scriptures, dating before the time of the Judges, in the sense in which the ignorant and obdurate men whose carcasses fell in the wilderness might have understood them? The well-meaning persons I allude to are always asserting that Christ, above all beings who ever appeared on earth, knew the meaning of the Scriptures. But it seems to be forgotten how he taught that the perfection of some parts of them consisted only in their complete adaptability to the case of the hard-hearted men for whom they were in the first instance projected; and that in this he did but confirm the idea shaped out by one even of the old prophets, that God at times gave statutes good only for the wayward people who needed the restraining burden; and judgments which, however well suited for their case, were in themselves utterly lifeless. They forget, too, how very often Christ pointed to natural objects; how he called on his Father as Lord, not only of heaven, but of earth; how he declared that it was God who caused the sun to shoot to us those energising beams of which we are just beginning to learn the composition, who made the rain to fall, who watched the movements of birds, and set in action the divinely organised machinery through which nourishment is evolved for plants, and food for animals and men. ‘Consider* the lilies of the field,’ said Christ; ‘shut not your eyes to their structure and loveliness. And know that the true interests of the members of God’s kingdom will be cared for by the very hand, the very intelligence, by which is given to those plants the organic conformation that fits them to collect from earth, air, water, and sunshine the materials provided for the glorious development

* *καταμάθετε*, a strong word, including the ideas of accuracy and diligence.

of their beauty.' God at sundry times and in divers seasons has made to men or peoples such representations of His attributes as they were competent to receive. If it is pleasing Him to make a special revelation of Himself at this time through the discoveries of science, just as it has pleased Him to do at other periods in other ways, it would be well for the alarmists who would like to see us as frightened as they are at the progress of knowledge, to think of the severe words that Christ used in rebuking the men who in his days failed to discern the signs of the times.

It is proper that I should now explain why I have taken as substantially true the records we have of Christ's words in the four gospels; and also why in my recapitulation of proofs and claims, I refer only to the reports presented to us in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Speaking now, not as a son of the church to fellow-members of the church, for it is no matter here whether I belong to the Anglican communion or am out of its pale; speaking not as an assertor of plenary inspiration to men who hold that to doubt the correctness of a word of the Bible is to question God's truth, for I am not writing to state what my private opinions on the subject of inspiration are; speaking not as one who undervalues any of the numerous plans which have been adopted by wiser men than myself for proving the truth of Christianity; but speaking as a citizen of the world to men of sense who have the faculty of reason, and possess just as good opportunities for forming an opinion, and have just as much right to do so as myself, I will say that I believe the four gospels to contain a trustworthy record of Christ's words, because I believe that up to the period within which they must have been written, *it was altogether beyond the powers of men in the circumstances of*

their compilers to invent such sayings as they attribute to Christ. For their own conceptions were entirely inadequate to these things; and if Christ had not been such as he is described, the Evangelists could not have got what they declare to have come from his mouth.

I must maintain that the gospels were all compiled before the commencement of the second century. And in supporting my proposition, I hope there will be no occasion to resort to *data* accessible only to men of more than ordinary acquirements or information.

In the first place I must mention one thing, because it almost speaks for itself. The slightest investigation will suffice to prove that the book of Acts, unless from first to last a glaring forgery, must have been written by a companion of the apostle Paul. The first person plural is used in describing some of the apostle's later movements, and specially in the account of the voyages towards Rome, the disastrous storm, the sojourn of the shipwrecked passengers at Melita, and the land journey to the capital. And I am not aware of any valid reason for imagining that one person did not write the book throughout; though he would, of course, have availed himself of the verbal accounts, or even written documents, of others in narrating things that had not come under his personal observation. Now, if any one will read the last two verses of the book of Acts, he will see that its writer, whose object—after describing the very early days of the church, and some events connected with the history of Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, and others—was evidently to state all he knew about Paul, abruptly closes his account with a notice of the residence of that apostle for two years in custody at Rome. I am not aware of any satisfactory hypothesis accounting for this sudden termination of the history, except the very obvious one that there had been no further occurrences to record at the

time the writer finished his 'treatise.' Two years after Paul's arrival at Rome would bring us, it is generally admitted, to the year 63, and the apostle is generally supposed to have been put to death about four or five years after that date. The book of Acts, therefore, according to this supposition, must have been put forth between A.D. 63 and 68. Another thing may be mentioned which seems of itself conclusive. The early Christians very soon began to hold the memory of those of their numbers who actually 'resisted unto blood' in very great, perhaps in comparatively undue, veneration; and would not the writer of the Acts have awarded to the great hero of the latter part of his story the crown of martyrdom, if it had been gained within the date of his work? My object in referring to these matters will be easily seen. I am endeavouring to assign an early date to the gospels; and the writer of the Acts was, or pretended to be, identical with the writer of the third gospel, generally supposed to be St. Luke's. This is perfectly evident from a comparison of Luke i. 1-4 with Acts i. 1, 2. It is equally evident that the latter book could not have been commenced till some time after the 'former treatise' had been finished, for we find that in the interval between the two, additional particulars had 'been delivered' to the historian by some 'eye-witnesses' of the Ascension. A personator of the compiler of the third gospel would hardly begin by correcting a work of which he desired to have the credit. But whether the book of Acts was written by an imitator of the Evangelist or not, makes no difference to my case, which is this—*What we call the gospel of St. Luke must have been compiled and put forth some time, and it probably was some years, before A.D. 63.* But suppose we take the year 61, when Paul arrived at Rome, though a consideration of the circumstances almost forces us to assign it an earlier date than that. A

person twenty-one years old at the time of Christ's death would only be in his fiftieth year when Luke's gospel appeared,* which is the same as saying that there must have been numbers of men then living who had seen Christ and heard the early teaching of the apostles.

And St. Luke was not the first Evangelist in point of time. Most critics say that St. Matthew's was the earliest of the gospels.

If it will be admitted that we can thus get a date within which the two most important of the synoptic gospels must have been put forth, we have still to go back in the Christian era for the original materials of which they were composed—materials in great measure common to all the three, but in some cases more or less used, and in some cases more or less copious, according to the individual judgment or object, or the measure of research of each several compiler. And these materials, I think there is every reason to believe, consisted partly of verbal records gradually moulded into form, or of written annotations of the real teaching of the apostles who were personal followers of Christ. Men in the position of the disciples soon after the Ascension, could not possibly have thought of sitting down to write. Most certainly no book would have converted three thousand souls in one day. They very wisely proclaimed the gospel with their mouths. But nothing would be more likely than that, after a few years, some of their hearers, seeing that the generation of the personal witnesses of the events of Christ's short ministry could not possibly continue very long to labour individually, would preserve their sayings in writing, so that the benefit of apostolic testimony might not be lost to the church. From such

* My ideal witness would of course be some years younger than I have made him out if the third gospel appeared between A.D. 50 and 58, as some learned men think.

materials it would seem that the first three Evangelists, without concert together, without seeing each other's writings, compiled their gospels, called *synoptic* because, however independent one of the other, they portray in the main the same series of events, presenting, up to the final entry into Jerusalem, a view of Christ's ministry in Galilee only.

My anxiety will have been noted to prove that the synoptists must have compiled their gospels by about the middle of the first century, or say soon after, and that the materials they faithfully and independently used—faithfully because we can often check one by another, and independently because there are occasional discrepancies, proving that they could not have acted in concert—must have had a yet anterior existence. I have been desirous to put these things in what appears to me the true light, because it may be made obvious for several reasons that the nearer date the records had to the time of Christ, the more trustworthy they must have been.

In the first place, the memory of words spoken becomes less distinct in proportion to the lapse of time since their utterance. This is an axiom of general application. But there are special reasons for the authenticity of sayings reported as Christ's, soon after his death. One is that, as I have already hinted, men in the position of Christ's disciples, Jews without foreign culture, altogether respectable, but not belonging to the higher classes of their countrymen, men deficient even in learning of such contracted scope as might be had from diligent waiting at the feet of the doctors of the law, could not possibly have invented the words they assigned to Christ. No middle-class Jew of his day, or of but few years after his day, could have imagined the character we have been contemplating. The assertions and claims we have had before us could not possibly have entered his conceptions. In

fact, it is perfectly evident that Christ when living was not understood. It is almost equally evident that the synoptists themselves did not comprehend the scope of the sayings they recorded. They have no theory to present harmonising the apparent contrasts in the character of a person so exacting and so accommodating, so denunciative and so meek, so dignified and so submissive.

Our present investigation scarcely requires us to fix on the names of those who severally compiled the synoptic gospels. There is no statement in Scripture on the point, and it cannot therefore be made an article of faith. I only allude to it because I conceive the authority of the first might be weakened by attributing it to one of the apostles. There is no reason to suppose that it does not faithfully hand down to us what Matthew was peculiarly wont to teach, but I cannot imagine that a personal attendant on Christ should have been unable to furnish the details which are given by one or both of the other synoptists when describing identical transactions. Merely because I have referred to the uncertainty of the authorship of the first gospel, I may add that one reads of no member of the early church more likely to have written the second than Mark. Every one knows that, although the omission of many actions and sayings recorded elsewhere makes it by far the shortest of the gospels, yet, besides relating two or three things otherwise untold of, its writer in several instances puts circumstantial details before us with a vividness and richness not found in the compilations of his fellow-Evangelists. Now, who so likely to have done this as the son of Mary—sister of the once wealthy, and always kind-hearted, Barnabas—of her whose house in Jerusalem was one of the head-quarters of the early church? * who so likely as the man whose quiet disposition led him to prefer a settled to a wandering

* Acts xii. 12.

mode of life ; whose sterling qualities, once undervalued,* were at length fully recognised ; † the spiritual son and companion of the favoured Peter ? With respect to the third gospel, I never heard any sufficient reason to think that it was not compiled by St. Luke.

But this summary has scarcely yet contained a mention of the gospel of St. John. And if we examine this, we may find a yet additional reason for believing that the synoptists composed their works in very early days indeed.

One hears sometimes of the simple, artless writings of the Evangelists. The first two gospels may be called so appropriately enough, and the third comparatively so, as there is the best grouping though the worst chronology in St. Luke. But I cannot call the fourth gospel artless at all. I do not disesteem it on that account, any more than I should think badly of a well-arranged, forcible, and argumentative discourse from the pulpit because I could not possibly say it was artless. John's gospel, authentic and genuine as I take it to be—and as honest and true as the others—is very different from them in more respects than one. The particular distinction I have to notice here is this—that whereas the three synoptists present us with nothing beyond a simple record of acts and sayings—that while we find in them no expression of opinion, no attempt whatever to educe a religious system from the facts they relate, the gospel of John, on the other hand, plunges into doctrine at once. And thus I think we have a weighty argument for the early date of the writings of the synoptists. As without the law sin is dead, so before theology existed there could have been no heresy. And so the only observations made by these writers refer to the fulfilment of certain prophecies in some of the events of Christ's history. But when the aged John took the work in hand, things were very different. The true faith

* Acts xiii. 13 and xv. 38.

† 2 Tim. iv. 11.

had been defined. Alexandrine learning had spread; there was bad philosophy to be rejected, and true philosophy to be accommodated to Christian principles; many false prophets had gone out into the world; there was a spirit of error which the faithful should try because it professed to be of God. In one word, there was orthodoxy in A.D. 90. And what divine, from the time of its birth till now, has been able to write without claiming to be its champion, and denying the possession of it to his opponents? And thus, I believe, we get one great proof that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written long before the close of the first century.

Priceless works these gospels are to us, for by a combination of their inartistic pictures we get full-length likenesses, some strikingly different from others, of the Son of man as he appeared at various times in his course from the bed in the stable to his lifting up on high among the people, from the empty tomb to his going up into heaven.

In the fourth gospel we have a work entirely different. It presents, I will not say an ideal picture, but a picture to convey an idea. It does not show an outline, but transmits an impress of the mind, as far as that can be done by bringing into prominence the feature most indicative of character. To illustrate what I mean—There is a process not only discovered, but to all appearance perfected, during the lifetime of men of the present generation, by means of which the rays shot from the sun to our world are made to fix in effects of light and shade on certain prepared surfaces the image of whatever can be brought within the focus of a refracting lens. While there can hardly be a family amongst us that does not possess a likeness thus secured of some valued friend, many of us may probably have two or more of the same person which, though perhaps taken in the same day, and by one manipulator, a stranger might be well excused for supposing

portraits of different individuals. There may be a representation of stern purpose in one of such likenesses, and of engaging amiability in another; yet we ourselves recognise the features of our friend in all, and prize each equally. For nature's agency is unerring as far as it goes, and we know that the difference in them is either occasioned by the varied degrees of light allowed at different times to fall on the sitter, or by alterations in his posture, or changes in the expression of his countenance, which might reveal sometimes one, sometimes another mental characteristic. And it seems to me that the three synoptic gospels present a collection of truthful portraits which may be compared to those I have been describing. Hard and sharp some of them are, and wanting in tone, a thing which mere light and shade cannot give. And as there are certain delicate hues which as yet I believe nature has altogether refused to register in marks of black and white, so some aspects of Christ's character are scarcely, if at all, presented to us in the first three gospels.

On the other hand, there cannot be one amongst us who has not at some time or other stood before the portrait of a friend or of a well-known personage painted by a man who has thoroughly mastered his art. Here may be only the face: we may see nothing of the figure. It may also happen that minor peculiarities may be looked for in vain, and that ideal prominence may be given to some eminently characteristic feature. But we cannot restrain our admiration. We call the work beautiful, and the likeness perfect.

Those who have such a painting of the face of a certain person, and have also likenesses of him such as were before described, possess the means of knowing exactly what manner of man he was.

Now, let us suppose that the apostle John, during his long tarrying here, had seen the compilations of the three synoptists, though neither of them at the time of writing

had seen the works of the others. Let us suppose that in the main he had been satisfied with their honest and truthful accounts of the events and words they related. He would see that they had been unable to record many of Christ's sayings because the apostles themselves had not been in the habit of mentioning them to the Jews whilst they were laying the foundation of the new edifice, and relating in Judea the mighty works done in Galilee, and witnessing to Christ's resurrection. But though he saw that what was intrinsically good and true was good for the church not only in its first days, but that it would be so to the end of time, he also saw—what, unhappily, some of us are slow to see—that there is or ought to be such a thing as growth. He saw that irresistible change and the progression of events require in due time the assertion of things to which prominence could not judiciously be given at an earlier period. Accurately discerning the wants of the church, John in his old age determined to supply them. The disciple whom Jesus loved, the friend who had leant on the Master's bosom at the last supper, could paint from memory a picture that in the nature of things no mere compiler could produce. He could transfer to his canvas those hues which no method open to the adoption of his predecessors could possibly enable them to seize.

John's was the completing work ; giving to the church the deeper thoughts, the inner mind of him who had come to 'declare God unto us' by words as well as actions. It is from the other Evangelists we know how Christ chose three only out of twelve apostles to be with him on several important occasions, and that John was one of those favoured men. May not Christ have carried the principle of selection still further, and have admitted John to a greater share of his confidence than was enjoyed by any other man ? May he not have found in John's mind some

response to his own, encouraging him to confide to a sympathising ear the conversations with Nicodemus, and the woman of Samaria; and afterwards, in the last walk on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, even the words that passed within the judgment-hall between Pilate and his prisoner? Is it not probable that when Christ went up to the feast of Tabernacles (John vii.) he took with him no more than one faithful companion, the same who has recorded so fully what passed at Jerusalem at the time? * We cannot account for John's gospel unless we believe that he had seen the three earlier ones, and had been satisfied with the way in which the circumstances mentioned in them had been recorded. Else why did he who had Mary for his companion after the crucifixion not give any account of Christ's origin and early days? His omissions seem to me to have the force of an apostle's *imprimatur* for the other gospels. Even when the sneer was uttered that the Christ of prophecy was to come out of Bethlehem, and not Galilee, John does not find it worth while to explain what has been sufficiently related in Matthew and Luke. Whilst I do not know of an instance in which John relates any incident in the life of Christ recorded by the other Evangelists unless a mention was necessary as introductory to an account of otherwise unrecorded events or discourses, as in John vi., I find that he does supply things necessary for our clear understanding of his predecessors. We should have been entirely ignorant, for aught that Matthew and Mark say, of what the false evidence they mention as borne against Christ was based on, unless John had related some words uttered at a cleansing of the temple, itself an act which he takes care to let us

* For if he had travelled with his usual retinue, how could he be said to go up, 'not openly, but as it were in secret?' It is true we read of *disciples* in John ix. 2. But they were excessively ignorant men, and not improbably some new adherents convinced by his words. In John vi. 66, 67, 'his *disciples*' and 'the *twelve*' are entirely distinct bodies.

know was performed not only at the close but at the beginning of Christ's ministry. We should have found great difficulties in some passages not repeated in John, where Christ, in apostrophising Jerusalem, referred to various opportunities which had been afforded to it by him, did we not from the fourth gospel know that Christ had on several occasions been to that city, and that in the heart of it he had uttered the words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.' It is remarkable also that John does not himself find it necessary to say anything about the false witnesses or the taunts of the priests at the foot of the cross, though he alone gives us the words which these perjurers and revilers distorted. And whilst John seems to have been so completely satisfied with the synoptic accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper that he found no occasion to add any particulars himself, he takes care to supply a report of some words said by Christ at Capernaum, which have a most important bearing on the subject. Then we are told in Matthew and Mark that when Christ was on the cross, a man gave him to drink. We could understand that a person less stony-hearted than most of the bystanders should wish to alleviate in some degree the sufferings of a dying man. But why, at a particular juncture, one close by the cross should suddenly run to fetch the sponge, and put it on a reed, &c., is quite unaccountable for anything that the two synoptists make known to us. But John explains. He tells us it was done when Christ said, 'I thirst.'

I find, too, that whilst John thus throws explanatory light on some statements of the synoptists, and at times gives a correcting touch, he never but once positively contradicts them. I am not sure that I need have made any exception; for learned men have put forth very ingenious theories to show that when the three give us to understand that Christ ate the passover with his

disciples, and the last gospel affirms that the day of crucifixion was also the day of preparation for the passover, the apparently irreconcilable statements may be harmonised. There may be circumstances, of which at this distance of time we are ignorant, that would explain all.* But if not, and I cannot say how this may be, I would rather accept the account of an eyewitness like John than of men absent. With respect to things mentioned by John, and not by the synoptists, it is much easier to understand why he should have related than why they should have excluded them. Fragmentary as the gospels are, we should have thought they would have all noticed so great a miracle as the raising of Lazarus. But if this omission is made a difficulty, I may ask, Why should two of the synoptists, as well as John, have left out all mention of the restoring of the widow's son to life, an example of power only one degree less astounding, if indeed there can be degrees of miracle in such a thing as raising the dead? And Luke adds to his account of the miracle, 'This rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the regions round about.'

It is said, too, that the words put into the mouth of Christ in the fourth gospel, and those recorded by the synoptists, do not seem like the sayings of one and the same person. It is true there is generally a great difference in style and manner between John and the three, although we occasionally find sayings in the fourth gospel which we should not have been surprised to meet with in the others; and there is one sentence, evidently often repeated by Christ, which appears in almost the same words in all.† But the difference noted cannot surprise

* It has been said there was some vagueness about the precise period for keeping the passover, and that Christ ate it on one day and most of the Jews on another.

† 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.'

us if we believe that the three former gospels were founded on records dating from very early times after the crucifixion, and that John wrote at an advanced period of life from memory. And well did that memory serve him. An interval of half a century could not efface the impressions made on him by the discourses at Capernaum, at the Pool Bethesda, in the temple, in the chamber, and at other private resorts in Jerusalem. But those impressions, deeply fixed in his own mind, he transmitted in his own way. In language of his own, and seldom with the freshness of the other Evangelists, he gave the meaning of what he had heard from Christ's mouth. In his old age he wrote like one who takes it for granted that what is clear to himself must be so to others; and accordingly there are no parts of the New Testament that seem to me so occasionally abrupt, no parts which give so much difficulty to a reader determined to trace connection and continuity, as the general Epistle of John, and his records of Christ's disputations with the Jews and instructions to his disciples.

But John had in some sense a more difficult task than the other Evangelists. Generally speaking, Christ's manner of teaching, his sociality and affability, his mighty and benevolent works, and his great pretensions as they were understood by the multitude, made him a popular character. He was esteemed and admired, not indeed by the Pharisees and lawyers, nor by the upper classes whom John calls *the Jews*, but by the general body of the people up to the time when they saw Christ yielding without resistance to his enemies. These at length had easy work in raising up the people, now exasperated against the man who had disappointed them of their hoped-for triumphs and worldly prosperity. The sermon on the mount, the parables, and other discourses given by the synoptists had been on the whole

well received. They had, at all events, impressed their hearers with a sense of Christ's dignity and authority. In the main they were simple and intelligible. Certainly they were the most profitable for repetition to the imperfectly instructed members of the infant church. To those babes, milk was appropriately given. Most injudicious it would have been to have repeated to the men of Jerusalem the sayings which had only just before excited their rage. But that was no reason why they should not be repeated at Ephesus sixty years afterwards, when the unhappy men who rejected them had been, to all appearance, rejected by God. John did repeat them, and thus took upon himself a work more difficult than that of the other Evangelists. Can we wonder that the record of painful discussions with misapprehending foes, and of heavenly instructions to slow-hearted disciples, should require some study to comprehend—that what was not clear to them should demand some patient research on our parts?

But if I think that John wrote things worthy of record, and at a time when he was the only person existing who could record them, that he testified what he had heard, and that there is every reason to receive his evidence, why, it may be asked, have I so scrupulously abstained from the use of his testimony in this chapter? My reasons are these. First, because whilst the earlier Evangelists, leaving their readers to draw inferences, had no object in writing but to communicate to men what they themselves had ascertained, John had an object before him beyond that of simply recording acts and words. He wrote for the purpose of supporting the doctrine of Christ's divinity. And if that is so, I can state the fact once for all in one line, without giving quotation after quotation, that—*John believed that Christ was God.* But another reason for the omission is, that there are persons at the present day who conscientiously believe that John's gospel ought not

to have found a place in the canon of the New Testament. Though greatly admiring it, they suspect its genuineness and authenticity. Now, this is a case in which I am not disposed to claim the benefit of a doubt. Our present enquiry has to be conducted before men who will admit nothing that cannot be proved to their own satisfaction. Therefore it has been my object to see whether a conclusion cannot be reached without any resort to the evidence of John. But the narratives of the four Evangelists are so interlaced—certain passages in each one of them become so necessary for the elucidation of matters in others—that I have been quite unable to exclude from examination certain reports found in ‘John,’ though in drawing out this summary I make no use whatever of my notes on them.

In a very imperfect state this summary would be left if I were to omit all allusion to one thing that ought to help those whose judgment I shall soon call for. It generally happens that when we would form a true estimate of a man’s worth, and would impartially scrutinise his course, we shall be greatly helped if we have the means of taking into account certain considerations external to himself. If we can see that there were chains of circumstances joining well together, which, without him, would have hung separate and loose; if we can see things preceding which found their completeness in him, and then things which in necessary sequence followed the exertion of his energies, shall we not so much the more intelligently and correctly estimate the influence of his life? So when I suggest that in Christ’s sayings recorded in the first three gospels we have the best, because the most genuine, materials on which to form our judgment of his nature and character, and when further we have got their particular value, I would not refuse to let that value be weighed in the grand

balance of right and wrong, in the scales of human progress and happiness, of the experience of nations and the march of morality and civilisation. It is true that we have been examining the sayings of one who lived as a person among men but thirty-three years, and whose public ministry lasted only about as many months. But we must look on the Son of man as the important central figure that gives significancy to the characters preceding and following in a great drama; of which a chorus of patriarchs and prophets lets us know that the commencement was coeval with the earliest communication of the Spirit of God with the soul of man, of which our own observation shows us that the action is still going on, and of which a glorious company of apostles has told us that the end is to be GOD ALL IN ALL. What to us would have been the pages of the old book in which we have acts and scenes extending over nearly four thousand years—in what would have consisted their interest to us—if they had not led up in steadily developing series to him who was born King of the Jews? If the New Testament of Jesus Christ did not carry the Old Testament under its cover, how many Europeans exist who would have heard of Moses, David, and the prophets? If no word of his had ever been uttered, would the writings of those sons of Jacob have kept till now? And then, since Christ's coming, do not the affairs of every nation whose history has been worth writing lead us back to him, as to one whose declarations and decrees, in the records of the gospels, have in some sort been regarded by them all? Does not whatever goes on before us now take a shape other than it could have had if Christ had not come? Should we not remember, too, that he was one of that ancient and peculiar people to whom especially the Divine promises were said to have been made—one of that generation which still exists in all parts of the earth in

unblemished purity of blood, and maintains its nationality without the possession of a single town in its own land—a people with a shattered polity, living on the feebly-valued tradition of covenant blessings which, except on one theory, would seem to have been irretrievably lost simultaneously with the failure of the oath of Him who pledged the honour of His Name for their security? For there is no answer to this aspersion on the honour of Israel's Lord of Hosts but on the supposition that he who came to save his own race has the power and the will to gather it in when the due time comes, as a shepherd brings home the lost sheep to the fold with rejoicing. Must not, too, the continued existence of the church be taken into account when we consider the words in which its founder declared what should happen to it? Have the gates of the grave prevailed against it? Though they have received through their ever-ready jaws first one then another of its leaders—indeed, every one of its members, from age to age, up to the present generation—has not the place of each departed one always been timely supplied? And though the love of many has waxed cold, though expectants of the Master's coming have all slumbered exactly as he predicted, has not the church grown up as from a small seed to a great tree, which is now spreading its roots and branches, notwithstanding depredations and tempests, even to the ends of the earth? Has not Christianity effected changes in the world, just as its originator said it would, like leaven hid in a lump of meal? And have not his predictions which looked quite in an opposite direction, come true? Have there not been desolating persecutions which, though the means of scattering the seed on congenial soil in some instances, have exterminated root and branch in others? Are there not parts of the earth at this very time where men had once tasted of the heavenly gift, but where faith is for the moment scarce to be

found? * Yet whilst we see that, as he said, tares must grow up with the wheat, and that fish, both bad and good, must be gathered in his net, can we not still point to some merchantmen who sell all they have to buy the pearl of great price? Can we not name those who would give all they possess to secure the hidden treasure? In fine, while Christ is but very dimly seen by some of us, and not even thought of at all by many of our companions, does not every one that now comes into the world in our midst walk by his light, as much at least as men walk by the light of the sun, though they see not his beams, on a dull and rainy day?

I have now gone through the case. I have presented evidence which I have endeavoured to examine in all its bearings with calmness and impartiality, and an honest desire to help in establishing the truth.

And with what success?

* Numbers of men in Germany at this moment who pride themselves on being guided by reason concur in lauding the beauties and advantages of morality; but declare that it naturally grows of itself in civilised societies, evolved from the gradual progress of human culture. 'Knowledge and culture,' they say, 'are the things that have advanced this morality. It is a fable,' they add, 'that in the shape enlightened moderns possess it in, it was ever proclaimed by any one in particular. Nevertheless we can afford to indulge any man who truly practises it with the innocent belief that he derives it from some personage or divinity, it matters not in the least to us which. Let the worthy man go on believing in his Odin or Jupiter, Jehovah or Moses, or Jesus if he likes, for we shall not take the trouble to disturb him; only don't let him make himself ridiculous by trying to reconcile notions inherent in the old creeds with common sense.' Very well, but how stand the facts? Why, the highest form of morality, Christian morality, which culture and knowledge are now finding the beauty of, which has borne the friction of 1,800 years and received only lustre from it, was really proclaimed by one who learned it not from others. In the midst of an evil and adulterous generation it sprang from the spirit inhabiting the form of a young man whom it is the fashion to call a Jewish peasant. And it would be too little to say that all the knowledge and culture of the world have never produced anything that has surpassed the code he gave.

On this important point my own opinion will go for nothing. It is for those who will deign to take into consideration what I have written, and not for myself, to say whether the anticipations I hazarded in my opening statement have been justified or not. It is my part simply to put the case before men of independent thought. According to English usage, a verdict on matters of evidence is not dictated. Yet before it is taken, those who have to decide are assisted by a general review of the testimony offered. And I may perhaps be permitted to imagine that in a case like the present, the final charge, when it had disposed of these preliminaries, might be concluded in words such as the following :—‘ I have now detailed the evidence that has been given us, and have explained to you its bearings. If trustworthy, it would incontestably prove, first, the possession of certain qualities by Christ—in other words, certain things respecting his nature and character ; and, secondly, the fact that he put forward certain very extraordinary claims. Now these two points must be taken in connection with each other. For some of the very remarkable characteristics first alluded to, appear, when separately examined, quite inconsistent one with the other, except on one consideration. And this brings me again to the second point—the claims said to be made by Christ—for if these may be admitted, all would be intelligible. His utterances, otherwise discordant, would become harmonious. For example, he describes himself as being among his disciples as one who served. Yet he issues the most autocratic commands, and requires—I will not only say the lifelong services of his immediate followers, but the complete submission of all men to himself. The solution is easy if his

They have never of themselves produced anything to come near it in its power over men, though scintillations of the same divine light have shone in some individuals.

claims are allowed. As a man, he comes in the form of a servant; but as the Holy One, born of the Virgin Mary, the Son of the Highest, he is the King of all, and all power is in his hands. You may feel a difficulty, which I can quite appreciate, in believing that God could thus become man; but if you are obliged to solve all difficulties, I am bound to say that you will be pressed with some at least as great if you decide against the divinity of Christ. With respect to the trustworthiness of the evidence offered from the three gospels, you have heard what has been brought forward. It is for you to consider whether the three Evangelists, writing at the times they respectively did, could have invented the words put into Christ's mouth, or any at all like them. If they could not, must he not himself have uttered them? But I must notice the fact that there is a mass of evidence that has been perhaps prudently kept out of sight in the summary, because some of you may not recognise the genuineness of the fourth gospel. But I must tell you that even if it is spurious, which it has not been proved to be, its very existence shows us clearly that, as soon as Christianity began to be moulded into a system, the godhead of Christ, which is maintained in that gospel from first to last, became one of the most prominent dogmas of theology. I must remind you, too, that Christ claimed the position of one who was the fulfilment of all prophecy. To give one instance only: "he expounded to two disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Now, an admission of his claims will give congruity to the successive developments of the dispensations recorded in the Bible from the commencement of God's dealings with man—each of them, in the way of morality and lofty conceptions of the Almighty, very far in advance of any religious system conceived by people who were not worshippers of Jehovah. And though we have no right to

say what God ought to have done or what He ought not, though we cannot scan His purposes and say that He is obliged to appear consistent to our limited vision—yet I may remark to you that without Christ, as he described himself, the whole system of the ancient Scriptures, from which we do not like to miss a harmonising bond, would fall to pieces. It may be expected, perhaps, that after noticing these points, I should insist on the personal consequences, momentous to every one of you, that depend on the way in which your decision is given. But I will not do so. Questions of fact and reason, of doubt and error, are not to be determined by considerations of self-interest. Exercise your faculties for the investigation of truth modestly, but as freely as God has given them. Without fear of man, let every one of you be fully persuaded in his own mind; for to his own Master, not to any fellow-creature, he standeth or falleth. But after a very careful attention to the testimony received, I may mention what you will not be justified in doing. Naught disparaging must you say of the great object of this enquiry. The evidence will not admit of this, whatever you may ultimately think of his peculiar pretensions. He is not to be despised. It is my province, of course, to speak of the case only as it is laid before you by those who conduct it. You may think it has not been carried on in a way to bring you to an entirely satisfactory conclusion. And it is possible there may be other and better methods which might more readily accomplish that purpose. But if you find it is not clearly proved to you that the claims stated to be made by Christ were all valid, there is evidence enough to show that no mortal man ever spoke like that awful yet loving personage. If in such case you must confess your inability to comprehend his character, you may say with all the perplexity, though with none of the contemptuous feeling that possessed the unhappy Jewish

Pharisees, "AS FOR THIS MAN, WE KNOW NOT FROM WHENCE HE IS." On the other hand, if you find there are good reasons for believing that the words attributed to Christ in the three synoptic gospels must have been uttered by him; and that he who could speak such wondrous words must have fully understood the scope and extent of the claims included in them (claims such as never any man put forth before his time, or has made since); and that his words prove that he stood possessed of qualities excluding the possibility of his making any false claims; then your decision may be very well declared in these terms: "This is now bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh. Yet in the bruised, wounded, but all-beneficent and finally triumphant SON OF MAN, we discern the glories of the Divine Majesty; we behold OUR LORD AND OUR GOD."

APPENDIX.



SOME REMARKS ON DR. DAVIDSON'S INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS.

WHILST engaged on my work, but very near its conclusion, I happened to see a notice of Dr. Davidson's last publication on the New Testament.* I thought it my duty to obtain it, though I knew too well that its perusal would be sure to unsettle my mind for a time, and entail on me some trouble, inasmuch as I should either have in honesty to alter much that I had written, or else to satisfy myself that I had good grounds for objecting to some of Dr. Davidson's decisions. My painful apprehensions were balanced in some degree by anticipation of the pleasure and advantage to be had in enjoying the fruits of the very studious research of a scholar of well-known ability and zeal. And my pleasurable and painful expectations were pretty evenly fulfilled.

Whilst looking through the volumes alluded to, I occasionally put on paper objections which suggested themselves with reference to Dr. Davidson's conclusions. I thought at one time of inserting my memoranda as notes at the foot of my pages. But I found, as I went on, that the materials were too extensive to be disposed of conveniently in that way, so I determined at last to relegate them in more connected form to this place. I have not the least idea of writing a general criticism on Dr. Davidson's work. Yet I feel bound to show why the opinions I had formed on the gospels have survived the shock which they had to submit to.

The gospel that goes by the name of St. Matthew is taken by Dr. Davidson as the first.

In the course of his remarks thereon, he announces as certain the conclusion that one (synoptic) Evangelist used the work of another.

* 'Introduction to the Study of the New Testament: Critical, Exegetical, and Theological.' By Samuel Davidson, D.D. Longmans, 1868. 2 vols.

'We rely,' he says, 'on the coincidences of Mark and Matthew alone, to prove the fact that the former used the latter. It is less certain whether Mark employed Matthew and Luke, or Luke Matthew and Mark. It seems pretty clear that one or the other was the case' (vol. i. p. 454). And 'the peculiar resemblance' between the two first gospels is a sufficiently 'valid argument of itself to overthrow a belief in the original independence of the Evangelists.' Now, I cannot see the justice of these conclusions. Dr. Davidson himself has stated that, besides any 'former gospels,' all the Evangelists employed other 'written sources' as well as 'oral tradition,' and that they possessed 'various documents now lost' (pp. 452, 453). What is there to prove then, or even to make it likely, that Matthew or Mark depended one on the other instead of on the 'written sources,' the 'oral tradition,' the 'documents now lost,' accessible to each, which would most likely have both embraced the principal events in Christ's life, and recorded his most important words? With the same materials, and the same desire for accuracy, the same wording must frequently recur. But the varieties of statement, and, I might say, discrepancies, between Matthew and Mark forbid my considering that either depended on the other.

We shall come in due time to the question of dates, and there is one thing I will notice here as we go on, only because it has some bearing on that question. Dr. Davidson says that Matthew's gospel was certainly not written in Greek, and that the apostle himself (I presume he means the writer of the gospel) was not the translator, and that the supposition that he published two works, the one in Aramæan and another in Greek, is baseless (p. 481). We are to conclude, then, that no necessity existed in Matthew's time for the translation of the first gospel into Greek. But Mark, according to Dr. Davidson, founded his gospel on the Greek version of Matthew. Unless, then, Mark wrote much later than he is generally supposed to have done,* the original Aramæan or Hebrew 'Matthew' must have had a very early date indeed. And this helps an argument in my last chapter in support of the correctness of Christ's reported words.

With Dr. Davidson's conclusion, that there is no real evidence to connect the first gospel, *as we now have it*, with the apostle Matthew, it will be seen, with what I have written in my last

* I must acknowledge that Dr. Davidson does assign a late date to our second gospel. But I have stated some reasons against this, and may have to mention one or two more.

chapter, I quite agree. I am glad to see that he thinks it '*based upon the Aramaean of Matthew*' (p. 482). But though I do not hold that the first gospel, as we have it in our Bibles, was compiled by 'an eyewitness,' I found my belief on the occurrence of certain minor inaccuracies and deficiencies of detail, and not, with Dr. Davidson, on the presence of 'phenomena' among which are 'several unhistorical and mythical elements.' I think the instances he brings forward in support of this assertion are quite insufficient to prove it, and I propose to notice two or three of them.

Dr. Davidson says, 'The charge to the twelve in chap. x. 19, &c., is introduced too soon, the disciples being told that the Son of man should come again to set up his kingdom before they had gone over the cities of Israel' (p. 485). This is inaccurate. Christ only says, 'till the Son of man be come.' 'To set up his kingdom' is added by Dr. Davidson. And he, as well as any one, must know that what is translated 'gone over' is, literally, 'finished.' Dr. Adam Clarke, in his note on v. 23, remarks, that it 'is very far from being the truth . . . that there should not be time for the disciples to *travel over* the cities of Judæa before Jerusalem was destroyed;' and he adds that *τελείω* is used in 1 Chron. xxv. 8 for 'teach,' as *perficio* is used by Ovid.* Is it not literally true that the cities of Israel have not been thoroughly taught by Christian instructors the principles of the New Dispensation, even to this time? And if Christ was able to foresee anything at all, what was there to prevent his delivering some predictions on the occasion—a very important one indeed—of the first sending out of the apostles? Even in our own days, when a missionary is solemnly dismissed on his way, is not an address sometimes given embracing much more than the assigned work of the individual, and anticipating periods of future labours, difficulties, and rewards that should intervene before the great work in view should be perfected? Events connected with Christ's coming (whatever that expression may mean) he did afterwards predict more explicitly in chap. xxiv. But what was there to prevent his giving some hints about them on this earlier occasion?

About the miracle of the tribute-money, Dr. Davidson writes, 'It is not said that the piece of money was actually found in the mouth of the fish. The accomplishment is not noticed as on other occasions. And while it is certainly possible that the piece of money may have been in the fish's mouth—for cases of this sort have occurred—it is not probable that the money would have been there

* '*Perficit Achillem.*' I admit that the verb *τελέω*, and not *τελείω*, appears in Matt. x. 23, but the words seem to be interchangeable.

ready for use rather than in the stomach.' I shall not offer a single word of comment on this most remarkable piece of reasoning, after which we shall not wonder that Dr. Davidson proves to his own perfect satisfaction that 'the miracle is gratuitous' (p. 488).

Dr. Davidson says that a mixture of 'later tradition' is shown in chap. xxiv., and that 'the signs and wonders preceding the destruction of Jerusalem do not correspond to facts. False Messiahs did not appear then, nor did any important wars take place.' It seems to me that one of these assertions rather militates against the other, because if 'later tradition' had foisted in anything it would be for the sake of crediting Christ with predictions proved to be true and not unfounded. But we have an account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the events preceding it by an able and learned man, who, though a Jew by birth, was more of a Roman than anything else at the time he wrote his histories, and never professed to be a Christian; and I thought he had told us of 'impostors and deceivers,' who 'persuaded the multitudes to follow them . . . and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of their folly.*' And the same historian gives a particular account of several 'evident signs' before the destruction of the temple, 'plainly foretelling future desolation.' † Some of these were in the heavens—'a star resembling a sword standing over the city a whole year,' and 'chariots and troops of armed soldiers in the clouds.' Also 'a quaking and a great noise,' and afterwards a 'sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence,"' &c. &c. He intimates that, however surprising these signals might be thought, the event was considerable enough to deserve them. ‡ And as to no important wars taking place, I hardly know what could be called an important war if that was not one which was waged between the Romans and the Jews, and only came to an end by the destruction of Jerusalem. But, after all, it is not certain that that dreadful event was principally referred to by Christ in this chapter. Till we are sure we thoroughly understand the meaning of its contents, I think we had better refrain from calling them inaccurate.

* Josephus, 'Ant.' book xx. chap. viii. § 6.

† *Ibid.* 'Wars,' book vi. chap. v. § 3, 4.

‡ Possibly Dr. Davidson may laugh at all these things. But it is a fact that Josephus recounts *them* with all seriousness as worthy of belief, whilst he allows his readers to give credit or not, as they think proper, to *some of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament*. It must be remembered, also, that the siege and destruction of Jerusalem happened in his own times.

Dr. Davidson says, 'It is *improbable* that two such opposite parties [Pharisees and Sadducees] should have united in presenting the same demand [for a sign from heaven].' Why improbable, if both sects equally disliked Christ? Have we not frequently seen in modern times two political parties of the most opposite principles combine for the attempted destruction of a third party, or for the humiliation of a leader disagreeable to both?

Dr. Davidson really thinks it worth while to object that Christ 'is represented as riding into Jerusalem on two animals, an ass and a colt' Well, he has told us that the Evangelist is altogether destitute of critical precision; so, suppose that Matthew has stated that the ass and the foal were brought to Christ and that he made use of them for his entry into Jerusalem, is it meant that the Evangelist was really such a dolt as to wish us to understand that Christ rode on both at once? If not, the objection falls to the ground. It is impossible for Dr. Davidson to prove that Christ did not ride, first on one, then on the other. But the passage may be accepted, as one couched in common parlance, without by any means insisting on this solution.

And after the burial of Christ, why is it '*not likely* that the Sanhedrists would have acted towards Pilate as represented?' They had prevailed on the Governor to crucify Christ, they were most anxious to prevent anything that could possibly give rise to reports of a resurrection. Pilate had given way in a very important matter; why should he not oblige them in what he would count a very trivial one? The existence of the report mentioned in Matt. xxviii. 15, at the time the first gospel was written, would go far to show that some circumstance of the kind discredited by Dr. Davidson, really occurred.

Dr. Davidson further writes, 'The words said to be addressed to the apostles by Jesus at his resurrection (xxviii. 19, 20) savour of a later time . . . the formula "into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" . . . is not original, and could hardly have been prescribed by Jesus himself' (p. 487). But must *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* mean '*into the name*'? Dr. Davidson himself, a few pages further on, calls attention to the fact that, where other Evangelists use *ἐν* or *ἐπί* (*τὸ ὄνομα*), the first has *εἰς*; and, as instances of this, he absolutely classifies the passage in question with the texts chap. x. 41, 42, and xviii. 20. But in the two last-mentioned passages it is impossible to give such a translation as '*into the name.*' Things are there referred to as done '*in the name*' of other parties by certain agents. A person gives a cup of water *in the name* of a prophet—persons are gathered together *in the name* of

Christ. And thus preachers in some of the pulpits of our church preface their sermons with the very formula commented on. They can mean no more than that *in the name* of the Trinity they preach to the people. Thus, too, the husband and minister both make declaration in the course of the marriage-service; and in the same sense (as I believe) does the minister speak in the baptismal service. After all, however, Dr. Davidson is not perfectly accurate in affirming that the expression occurs in chap. x., but he evidently considers that the omission of the article ($\tau\acute{o}$) makes no difference whatever.

It is true we do not meet with the formula in the Acts; but the absence of any record of it does not prove that it was not used. It is to be supposed that Philip said something when he baptised the eunuch, but not a single word of his is recorded on this occasion. I might state a few reasons why probably the formula in question may not have been used by the apostles in very early times, if I did not wish to avoid making this notice unnecessarily long. But it may be well to call attention to the fact that literally the formula was provided for the heralds and ministers of the gospel against the time that they should go to proselytise *all the nations* ($\pi\omicron\rho\epsilon\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\tau\epsilon\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \dot{\epsilon}\theta\eta\eta$); so that, if we come to a question of mere words, to which I for one do not wish to reduce the matter, it may be said that neither the case of native nor Hellenistic Jews was referred to at all; the Gentiles were to be so baptised *when* a general proclamation of the gospel should be made *to all nations*.

Dr. Davidson also asks, 'If Matthew were acquainted with his [Christ's] doings and teachings in Judæa, why did he ignore them?' He adds, 'No answer can be given to this question.' I have touched on this point in my last chapter. I will therefore now only recall attention to the fact that Dr. Davidson in an earlier part had stated most positively that Mark used Matthew, and perhaps used Luke as well; and that Luke used Matthew, and perhaps Mark as well. Yet there are several things mentioned in Matthew and Mark not to be found in Luke, and in Matthew and Luke omitted by Mark. If Mark and Luke were acquainted with these things, why did they ignore them? If I adopted Dr. Davidson's mode of argument, I should have a perfect right to say, 'No answer can be given to this question.'

But notwithstanding the numerous objections made, it is a fact, and one for which I feel very thankful, that a man of Dr. Davidson's learning and research, and I must add (without intending offence, for I give him all credit for sincerity) habits of scepticism, should honourably state in a subsequent page (490), 'The discourses

attributed to Jesus [in Matthew] have the marks of originality, and are worthy of him.' This is just the testimony that I require for the purposes of my present work. I regret that after making it Dr. Davidson should have resumed an attitude of hostility, and gone forth again to make havoc of the Evangelist's statements, which, according to him, 'partake of the mythical,' and 'symbolise certain ideas which are easily traced,' &c.

About the date of 'Matthew,' he declares that 'the baptismal formula, with such passages as xvi. 19, xviii. 17, and xxiv. 14, prevent the critic from putting the canonical gospel before A.D. 100.' But those who will concede the least degree of foreknowledge of future events to Christ, or will admit that he possessed any authority to designate a chief among his disciples, or any influence such as a leader even human and mortal usually exercises on his followers, will not see the justice of this conclusion. I might even say more. It is certain that some interpolations have been made by transcribers in the usually received text of the New Testament. I do not think the baptismal formula is one of them. But neither I nor Dr. Davidson can prove that it was not an addition made after the first of our gospels originally appeared in the form that we otherwise have it.

Dr. Davidson places Luke's gospel next in order of time to Matthew's, and considers that whilst it is certain that the writer of 'Luke' drew some of his materials from 'Matthew,' it is difficult at the present day to determine the nature and number of other documents that he employed (vol. ii. p. 8). Its writer must, however, have known and used the Pauline literature (p. 12). As to the general opinion that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the writer of Acts and author of the third gospel, Dr. Davidson says: 'Both hypotheses are untenable. . . . Both [books] proceeded from the same person, who could not have been Luke, because of the time when the third gospel was written, as shown by internal evidence' (p. 25).

In the course of Dr. Davidson's remarks on this gospel, he informs us that it is constructed on a more catholic plan than Matthew's, and that it has a Pauline tendency. Amongst other ways of supporting this assertion, he states that 'seventy disciples were appointed whose mission was to carry the gospel to the *Gentiles beyond the twelve tribes* of Israel, to whom the apostles were specially charged to announce it' (p. 44). Was this really so? I cannot find a hint of it in Luke x., which tells us that the seventy were 'sent to every city and place whither the Lord himself would come;' and when did Christ 'go beyond the twelve tribes of

Israel, carrying the gospel to the Gentiles'? Before closing his strictures on this gospel, Dr. Davidson very truly remarks that 'conservative critics will hesitate to forsake the old faith of the church [with respect to the reality of Christ's resurrection].' He adds, however: 'Others, more speculative but not less honest . . . feeling the force of objections to the reanimation of a body . . . will hesitate to accept the literal.' Dr. Davidson evidently shows the hesitation, not in the former, but in the latter sense. But I must doubt whether he can seriously believe that those who base all their hopes on the reality of Christ's resurrection would be adequately recompensed for the loss of them by his admissions respecting 'the stainless conscience of Jesus, his life of love and purity,' and 'the glorious manifestations of Divine love in a human person [presented in Christ's life].' I am persuaded there are yet many persons who, if they only had such cold comfort as this in place of the old faith of the church in the resurrection, would be ready to declare with the apostle Paul, that of all men they should be the most miserable.

Dr. Davidson states that the gospel we call Luke's was written 'perhaps about A.D. 115' (p. 54).

I will not linger on his remarks about this gospel, but go on to notice something of what he says about the Acts of the Apostles. I must do this, not because my work has to do with that book, but because on points of date and questions of authorship neither one of the two treatises commonly ascribed to Luke can be considered without reference to the other.

On the later book, Dr. Davidson favours us with some very long, but exceedingly interesting disquisitions; but they would be more pleasant to read if they were not interspersed with many arbitrary and some unsupported assertions, such as the following: 'The miracle and its accompaniments are unhistorical.' 'There is no need to deny the fact of the imprisonment or the speedy liberation of the apostles by the authorities; the rest is the writer's.' 'The Nazarite vow appears to be imaginary.' 'Many particulars respecting Paul cannot be accepted as historical' (p. 257). 'Whatever the sources [of Acts] were, the writer did not hesitate to use them freely; changing, abridging, adding, adapting, and shaping them to suit the leading purpose he had in view' (p. 260).

Dr. Davidson also states: 'The book proceeded from one man—it was written by the author of the third gospel—his name cannot be identified with any of those who accompanied Paul' (p. 260). 'As we have put the [third] gospel much later than [the time of] Luke, the Acts were not written by him' (p. 269). 'Whoever the unknown person was, he wrote as if he were a companion of Paul,

and probably under the garb of Luke' (p. 272). Dr. Davidson's reasons for such conclusions, where he states them, are founded very much on a few discrepancies he discerns between some of the statements in the Acts, and certain expressions in Paul's Epistles. But if his assertions are sufficiently maintained by good proof, which I am by no means sure that every one would admit, it would be a question whether such variations are greater than the discrepancies, or, as Dr. Davidson would say, contradictions—and I do not know that the term would be too strong, if we were sure the synoptists had seen each other's works—which exist in the various gospels; things which I look upon as telling in favour of the general and independent truth of four works compiled by distinct authors, of whom only one, and he an aged man at the time of writing, was an eyewitness. Luke might have been misinformed about some unimportant particulars of Paul's history, occurring when he was not with him; just as he and Mark might have been slightly inaccurate in their accounts of some of Christ's actions. And if there are discrepancies between Acts and Paul's Epistles, the circumstance would tend to prove just what I wish to establish—that Acts was written at an early date. For if the Epistles had been in general circulation at the time, the writer would not have made his narratives inconsistent with Paul's own declarations.

We go on to read in Dr. Davidson's book: 'It is impossible to discover the person included in the *we*-sections. He may have been Luke, though the designations of time in xx. 6, xxvii. 9, are against this view. At any rate it is pretty clear that he was an eyewitness of the events described, and kept a journal. The general writer was distinct from him, and gives evidence enough of his remoteness from the times and scenes he speaks of. Among the materials at his disposal, he inserted these *we*-portions from the journal kept by the companion of Paul, usually, but not always, without alteration. No proper link of connection can be inferred between the authorship of the *we*-paragraphs and the rest of the treatise, because the first person is also used in chap. i. 1. On the contrary, the first person *singular* in i. 1, is rather against the identity of the two' (p. 275).

I think the last remark pointless. In writing a letter I might very naturally explain in the first person singular why I undertook to do so. But if in the course of my letter I described a journey taken by myself and another person, I should certainly write in the first person plural, '*we went, we saw,*' &c.

Dr. Davidson proceeds to note the 'striking coincidence between the actions and fortunes of Peter with the primitive apostles, on the

one hand, and those of Paul on the other' (p. 275), and he gives a good list of the parallel deeds and honours of Peter and Paul, according to Acts, and asks, 'Can this parallelism represent authentic history? The coincidences indicate purpose, and can scarcely have been accidental or providential' (p. 276). Now I do not think this objection is philosophical. Here are two chief apostles, both preaching the gospel of Christ, both credited with miraculous powers, and both are placed in circumstances of danger from opponents. Should we not expect that the experiences of both would be somewhat alike? If any account said they were not, would not an objection be sure to be raised on the score that similar causes were made to produce opposite consequences? And do we not see that in times of religious excitement, the history of one confessor reads just like that of another? The answers and actions of one of our noble martyrs in the Marian persecutions, might be almost stereotyped for those of a fellow-sufferer; and much the same may be said with respect to the worthy men ill-used for conscience' sake, whose faith and patience are recorded in the 'Nonconformist's Memorial.' But the real truth seems to be, that there is quite as much variety depicted in Acts as might have been expected. I fail to detect the least parallelism in the '*severe miracle*' (p. 276) of Peter's striking two persons dead, and the circumstance that a man, in whom an evil spirit was, leaped on the seven sons of Sceva, and drove them out of doors naked and wounded. There is not even a hint in the narrative that Paul incited the possessed man to do this; and even if he had, the condition of the seven men running off after a sound beating was somewhat different from that of Ananias and his wife, when the young men came in who wound them up, carried them out, and buried them. And what has Dr. Davidson to show for Peter, answering to Paul's shipwreck, or his immunity from hurt when bitten by a viper? * Dr. Davidson rules that the omission of certain disasters that befell Paul is not accidental on the part of the writer of Acts, and that some of the '*misfortunes introduced*' were '*perhaps from his own invention.*' I think an author ought to be very careful indeed who makes such assertions about a writer generally held to be inspired. He ought to be quite sure that he himself never '*turns facts aside from their bearing,*' or '*draws upon his imagination*' (p. 279).

Further, Dr. Davidson would discredit the book, because therein Paul '*utters Petrine sentiments;*' and, '*on the other hand, Peter and the early apostles express liberal Pauline ideas*' (p. 279), and

* A miracle, together with that of the healing of Publius and other sick persons in Melita, and, I should add, the restoration of Eutyclus to life, related in '*we-portsions*' written by '*an eyewitness, who kept a journal*' (p. 273).

because Paul is too 'Jewish-Christian,' and the others too Pauline for an independent account (p. 280).

Now what is the meaning of the word Pauline? and what were usually the sentiments of Peter? We have two authorities which we may at this day consult on the matter—viz., the contents of the New Testament, and Dr. Davidson's arbitrary definitions; but as they are contrary the one to the other, I propose to elect the former. I gather then from Scripture that Peter and Paul, being both sincere Christians, preached very much the same doctrines; but that *Peter*, although the first authoritatively to admit Gentiles into the church, found that on the whole his talent was more congenially and profitably employed in labouring within the commonwealth of Israel than in offering the heavenly citizenship to aliens. Continuing thus in contact with, not only the institutions, but the prejudices of the old race, this champion of the truth, brave and faithful at heart, was peculiarly exposed to his besetting temptation to avoid singularity and escape personal remark by improper concessions; and on one occasion especially, the fear of man, which had been too much for him in the palace of the high priest, caused, if not exactly a fall, the sad humiliation of having to be set right by the rebuke of a brother apostle, called long after the rest. But there is no proof that Paul held him in anything like habitual disrespect. Indeed he says that he went up once to Jerusalem years after his conversion for the very purpose of seeing Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; and that fourteen years after that visit he received from the same apostle the right hand of fellowship. And Paul expressly declares that the same God who was mighty in him wrought effectually in Peter. The passage in 1 Cor. i. 12, cannot prove any real difference between them, for if it did it would be also an acknowledgment from Paul that there was a real disagreement between himself and Christ.* Then if we look to the Epistles first and second of Peter, we cannot possibly call them Petrine in Dr. Davidson's sense of the word. But he, of course, rejects the second; and the first he considers too Pauline to have been the work of Peter. In other words, he draws a portrait of the apostle with features quite different from those depicted in Scripture, and then says the New Testament is incorrect because it does not present the same sort of likeness as he does. But even if a forger wished to pass off an epistle as Peter's, is it probable he would fill it with sentiments

* 'Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.' If the Corinthians themselves chose to split into parties under these names, they only got Paul's blame for doing so.

known by the early church to be in direct opposition to those entertained by the apostle ?

And so about Paul, *mutatis mutandis*, I must answer in much the same way ; for Dr. Davidson rejects some of the Epistles that go by his name, because they are not ' Pauline ' ; and according to him the Acts is unworthy of credit because Paul is made ' Petrine ' in it. The fact is that Dr. Davidson's Paul is a thoroughly one-sided, unimpressible creature, such as men who could give a ' touch of nature,' as the Scripture writers do so often, would never have described—because it never existed. He was not a rigid being whose ideas and feelings at one particular juncture admitted of no modification at any other period of his life. The same apostle who, writing under great excitement to the fickle and unsteady, uses strong or even violent language, would write in moments of calmness in very different terms to spiritual children steadily attached to his person and constant in the faith. Paul was a man who could come in the spirit of love or threaten the rod, as respectively he had to address the docile or unruly, the loyal or rebellious, the firm or the wavering.

If we met with a biography of some clergyman who had been an eminently consistent Christian from the very beginning of his ministrations, we should not consider it truthful if it described him as exactly the same from the opening to the close of his career.

Dr. Davidson dates the publication of Acts about A.D. 125. I must take exception to this. And if I received as authoritative some things that he has written, they would strengthen the arguments used in my last chapter in support of much earlier dates than he assigns to that book and the gospel of Luke.

I rest my case mainly on the first few verses of Acts compared with the last chapter of Luke, and on the last two verses of Acts. And it must be borne in mind throughout that Dr. Davidson states that both treatises were written by the same hand, and that the gospel was the earlier of the two by ' perhaps ' ten years. I must also claim a right, when Dr. Davidson's statements are contradictory one to the other, to consider that the last he mentions is his deliberate and finally adopted conclusion. It is necessary to go by some rule of this kind, because, in commenting on the gospel (of Luke), he writes, '*Apparently* the Ascension took place on the day Christ rose.' But '*. . . there is still room for inserting the forty days at the fiftieth verse*' (p. 40).* But in coming to Acts, he writes as if this admission had been weak and wrong. He states unequivocally—

* The Italics are my own.

cally, 'According to the gospel, the time of the Ascension *was the day of the resurrection*; according to the Acts, the fortieth day after' (p. 196). Now, incidentally, I must be allowed to mention that I cannot accept the statement that Luke's gospel makes Christ ascend on the day of resurrection. For we see (xxiv. 29, 30) that he sat down to a meal at a place seven and a half miles distant from Jerusalem at an hour when the day was far spent, that two men after that meal walked back that distance to Jerusalem, that some little time was passed in conference with fellow-disciples, and a still longer time, we may suppose, in receiving proofs from Christ himself, who at length made his appearance amongst them there. What must have been the time, when a meal had been eaten, a walk of seven and a half miles taken, and a conference held, *after the day had been far spent*? Yet it is Dr. Davidson's most deliberate opinion that the writer of 'Luke' represents Christ as then walking two miles (from Jerusalem to Bethany), and then, *the same day*, ascending before them! But if I could accept all this, my argument would be much helped, because the writer of the gospel would be proved to be still more ill-informed of the events preceding the Ascension than I had made him out to be. And I maintain that it is impossible that any one possessing the ability and desire of knowledge shown by the writer of 'Luke' could possibly have applied himself in the year 115 to the work of compiling a history of Christ in ignorance of the fact that he was understood to have remained on earth some days at least after his resurrection. It is plain he could not ever have read 'Matthew,' for that gospel allows time for the disciples to leave Jerusalem and assemble in Galilee. According to Dr. Davidson, Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians A.D. 57. But therein several appearances of the risen Christ are spoken of which could not possibly have happened on the same day. Therefore, as these things were certainly known in the church, and especially by the Paulines, in the year 57, the Pauline writer of the gospel must have finished it before that date; and I am glad to see what I had maintained thus more than confirmed by Dr. Davidson himself. And I think it may be fairly asked, would one 'writing under the garb of Luke' have shown so little sagacity at the outset of his second treatise as to cast discredit on the account with which he had concluded his first? A forger would have preserved a greater consistency, especially at the very moment after he had called attention to his earlier work. But we can easily imagine that the Evangelist who had written soon after the year 50, and had been much with the most eminent man in the church since, would, with nothing to fear as a sincere seeker after

truth and an honest historian, gladly correct and amplify a previous account when possessed of further information.

The book of Acts was apparently written not many years after the gospel of 'Luke,' and this agrees very well with the date of A.D. 64 or thereabouts, which has been generally assigned to it in consequence of the point at which it ends—Paul's dwelling two years in his house in Rome after his first arrival at that city. The fact of the history breaking off there seems to show that nothing further had happened to Paul when the writer laid down his pen. Dr. Davidson of course thinks differently, but he is obliged to bring forward some explanation of this abrupt close. He accordingly says, 'Paul's death is unnoticed, in accordance with the general desire to glorify him' (p. 277). Does he mean that a writer in A.D. 125 would really wish his readers to imagine that Paul was still upon earth? If not, I do not see what the argument is worth. Does he really mean that the writer of Acts cast dishonour on Stephen and on James by relating the manner of their departing this life? But, again, I can turn to a statement of Dr. Davidson's which contradicts what he says here and supports my position. In vol. i. p. 411, he writes, 'It was customary to *exalt* the apostles by making them die that death [of martyrdom].' It is really hard to be required to believe one thing when the authority of 1 Peter is being disputed, and directly the reverse when the authenticity of Acts has to be discredited.

I have written enough, I trust, in support of my opinion about the date of the gospel of 'Luke.'

The gospel that goes by the name of 'Mark,' Dr. Davidson places third in order of time, assigning to it the date of about A.D. 120. Of course, therefore, he cannot allow it to have been written by Mark. He seems to admit that there was some foundation for the ancient belief that Mark did write something, but he endeavours to prove that this was not what we now have under his name. He says, 'The statement of John the Presbyter, as preserved by Papias and recorded in Eusebius's history, is to the effect that Mark did *not* write *in order** the things spoken or done by Christ. . . . The opposite of *not in order* is *arrangement*;' and Dr. Davidson points out that the gospel of 'Mark,' as we have it, *has* the same *arrangement* as 'Matthew's' and 'Luke's,' and argues that it cannot therefore be the same as was referred to by Papias, which had no *arrangement*' (p. 80). Yet for this matter of *arrangement* our gospel of 'Mark' may, after all, be what Papias

* τὰξει.

referred to; for Dr. Davidson, only twenty pages after, forgets what he has said, and states that the writer of this gospel 'is more intent on picturesque details than on *arranging* and combining the body of the history' (p. 100). And, after all, may not the terms employed by John the Presbyter very well apply to the gospel as we have it? For how can a biography be said to be written *in order* which takes no notice of a person's birth and early days, and omits many things known to have been done and said by him? I do not see how Dr. Davidson can prove his assertion that it 'was not known to Papias' (p. 111). And I find no reason to withdraw what I have written in my last chapter about the gospel of 'Mark.'

We must now consider some of Dr. Davidson's observations on the fourth gospel, and my notice of them shall be as brief as possible.

In the course of his analysis of contents, he writes, Christ 'would not be delayed in the act of his ascension, which the Evangelist conceives of as following immediately upon the resurrection. No interval of forty days is thought of between the two events. Both are parts of one act' (p. 337). Shall I be believed when I say that Dr. Davidson writes thus, and yet immediately goes on to notice the appearance to Thomas, which the Evangelist expressly states was eight days after? And how can Dr. Davidson possibly construe Christ's words to Mary Magdalen as meaning that he was ascending so instantly that he could not wait even one moment to be touched, when he reads directly after that, subsequently to the delivery by Mary Magdalen of Christ's message to his disciples, he appeared to them in the evening; the interview with Mary Magdalen having been when it was only just getting light in the morning? The words seem to me rather to imply that further opportunities should be accorded to the eager, loving woman when no active services were required of her.

Dr. Davidson also says that according to the Evangelist the risen Christ 'did not appear in a gross, material form,' but floated about (p. 338). And he employs these extraordinary words: the Evangelist's 'description is inconsistent with itself, for how could a pneumatic body have clothes like a gardener's, or show the print of nails in the hands and a mark of a wound in the side? It is therefore unhistorical' (p. 339). Now where does this gospel speak of a pneumatic body? Paul speaks of a spiritual body, but the Evangelist does not, though he mentions the coming of Jesus into the midst of the disciples assembled with closed doors. But if the door were opened miraculously without their knowledge, or if Christ in some miraculous way entered whilst it was closed, the

miracle would not have been greater than many we read of in the synoptic gospels. And that which is a body at all, even though it be a spiritual body, must have sides and hands. But Dr. Davidson supports his assertion in a very curious way when he says, with reference to the risen Christ's visits, described by John, 'He appeared;' and he puts the word *appeared* in italics to make us understand that it is an expression used by the fourth Evangelist. I naturally turned to John xx., to see in what connection or sense it was used. To my astonishment, I found that the words 'he appeared' do not occur in that chapter at all! They are employed in the New Testament with reference to the risen Christ by *Luke* (xxiv. 34, ὄφθη), an Evangelist who fully believed in his substantial corporeity, formed of flesh and bones, and possessing the power to eat; and by *Mark* (xvi. 9, ἐφάρη, and 12 and 14, ἐφαιερώθη). And, strangely enough, while the term does not appear in John xx., we do read in the following chapter, which Dr. Davidson describes as a later appendix, *resembling the synoptic method*, and *not written by the Evangelist of the fourth gospel*, that Christ showed himself (xxi. 1, ἐφαιερώσε, and 14, ἐφαιερώθη). Whilst in John xx. Christ is represented as *coming* and *standing*, pointing to his hands and his side at one time, and inviting a *touch* as a test of *substantial reality* at another. The aerial phantom conjured up by Dr. Davidson is too easily puffed away to frighten men out of their belief. His remark this time is quite right, 'It is unhistorical.'

Dr. Davidson afterwards writes, 'Jesus speaks of *your law* in addressing the Jews as if he had nothing to do with it' (p. 349). But we do not find the Old Testament undervalued or the law of Moses ignored in the fourth gospel. We read therein, 'Moses in the law, and the prophets did write' . . . 'Moses wrote of me;' and it is plain that Christ is represented as keeping the law, for he said to the Jews, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' and sin with them consisted in the infraction of the law.

Dr. Davidson says the writer of the fourth gospel must have been 'a Gentile-Christian, whose birth and education estranged him from the privileged people.' The 'external relation to Judaism assumes ever the form of hostility. . . . The writer's sympathies are more favourable to heathens and to Pilate himself than to the Jewish people. . . . In the synoptists the Galileans are the warm friends and adherents of Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 433). It seems to me that these assertions cannot be sustained. I do not find in the fourth gospel more hostility on the part of the Jews to Christ than in the synoptics. 'His own,' to whom he came (John i. 11), were Jews. True they did not as a body (as the synoptists

also declare) receive him, but 'to as many of them as did receive him, he gave power to become the sons of God.' The Baptist spoken of as 'bearing witness' to Jesus was a Jew. The disciples were Jews, and the name was honoured when Christ called Nathanael 'an Israelite indeed.' This gospel states that 'many of the Jews believed.' In it Nicodemus, a Jew, has honourable mention. Therein we also find that Christ said, 'We [the Jews] know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews;' that many of the people believed on him; that some said, 'This is the Christ;' that the officers of the Jews said, 'Never man spake like this man;' that many resorted to him, and said, 'All things that John spake of this man were true;' that 'many of the Jews which came to Mary believed on him,' so that the Pharisees said, 'If we let this man alone, all will believe on him;' that much people took branches of palm-trees and went forth to meet Jesus, so that the Pharisees said, 'The world is gone after him,' &c. &c. I fully admit that Christ is made to use some very severe expressions in the fourth gospel with reference to the Jews. But let us see what is said in the synoptical gospels about them. We are told by Dr. Davidson that they represent the Galileans as the 'warm adherents and friends of Jesus.' But it is not John who relates how the men of Nazareth thrust him out of their city, and led him unto the brow of their hill, that they might cast him down headlong, or who records the awful denunciations on Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. And as to the people of Jerusalem and the nation generally, it is not in the fourth gospel that we read how their house should be left to them desolate, how their city should be burned up, and the murderers therein destroyed. John does not record the self-invoked most awful curse, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' And I might add, if necessary, to the list of examples proving that the synoptists are quite as severe against the race as the fourth Evangelist is. It should be remembered, too, that when the latter speaks of 'the Jews,' he generally alludes to the ruling classes, admitted on all hands to be hostile to Christ. Language of extreme violence is found against them in other gospels besides John's.

It seems strange that Dr. Davidson, who expresses doubts about the authorship of all but a very few of the books of the New Testament, should include amongst those few the Apocalypse, which was about the last book to be received into the canon, and has found objectors from the early days of the church until now. Dr. Davidson assigns it in no uncertain way to the apostle John; and declares that the same writer could not have composed both it and the fourth gospel, as the difference between the two is so great in

language, style, and spirit. Reasons which I have thought satisfactory have been given by other authors to account for these differences, but I have not space to state them here. However, Dr. Davidson calls John a sexagenarian (p. 442) at the time of writing the Apocalypse. Yet he judges that the author of such a book could never attain 'a mental condition of perfect serenity,' or avoid showing traces in his latest writings of any 'profound revolution' through which he might have passed (p. 442). But if he had the fierceness ascribed to him at sixty, I do not see why serenity may not have come towards the close of his life, twenty or thirty years afterwards, especially if there be any truth in the stories about his loving disposition in extreme age.

It is admitted, however, that the author of the fourth gospel 'meant his work to be taken for the apostle's;' but, adds Dr. Davidson, 'he idealises John' (p. 442), giving him the pre-eminence, whilst he makes Peter 'recede into the background' (p. 443). But is this a fair statement? I will mention a few things in this gospel which may help us to judge. Therein Christ is made to say to Peter, 'Thou art Cephas.' Peter it is who answers for the twelve, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' Peter is the spokesman at the washing of the disciples' feet. Peter, at the last supper, gives directions to John to ascertain a certain matter of Christ. Peter is the only one who is courageous enough to raise a hand in Christ's defence against overwhelming force. Peter is the first to run to the sepulchre, and the one who dared to enter in by himself, whilst the disciple who had proved swifter than he did not venture to go down till Peter had preceded him.

Dr. Davidson thinks the book was written (with a good object) about A.D. 150. But is it reasonable to suppose that any one could conceive the idea of personating John fifty years after his death, and of palming a work upon the church as the apostle's, seen for the first time at that date? I would also ask every one who has attentively read it, if it is possible that any but one present at many of the scenes described therein could have been its author? Who but an eyewitness would have thought of so many little matters as are often mentioned? It is of no consequence whatever to the course of the narrative, that a certain event occurred 'the third day' after something else (ii. 1)—that, at another time, 'John was baptising in Ænon near to Salim' (iii. 23)—that 'there arose a question about purifying between some of John's disciples and the Jews' (25)—that 'Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him' (xi. 16)—and that a servant of the high priest was 'named Malchus.' Could a forger

have thought of giving the cumbrous particulars about the boat at the side of the Lake of Capernaum, and have written with rather awkward minuteness about the 'other boats that came from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks' (vi. 22-24)? and that when certain Greeks wished to see Christ they applied to Philip, 'which was of Bethsaida in Galilee,' and that 'Philip told Andrew, and that Andrew and Philip again told Jesus'?

Dr. Davidson affirms that the object of the fourth gospel was to exhibit Christ as a being of superhuman glory. Why, then, is there no allusion to the transfiguration; and why does it mention Christ's weariness when sitting on the well? He also says that this gospel is complete in itself. Why, then, does it tell nothing whatever about the way in which Christ came into the world? Its author could not have left this out because he altogether ignored an earthly parentage for Christ, for the 'mother of Jesus' is expressly mentioned as present at the first miracle and at the last sad scene. And how could the Evangelist have intended his account to be a complete one when he wrote, 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book'? Omissions and expressions like these help to prove the supplementary nature of this gospel.

It is time that I should conclude my notice of some of Dr. Davidson's remarks on the gospels. I do not profess to have touched upon the whole of them; and as I wish as much as possible to avoid whatever does not strictly appertain to my present object, I will not proceed to make any observations on what he writes respecting the epistles usually attributed to the apostle John, or to other parts of a work of which the Introduction to the Gospels and the Acts forms only a portion.

That work, most important as it is for reference, and abounding in learned information which it must have cost great labour to collect and arrange, would, I venture to think, have been a still more valuable contribution to our Biblical literature if it had exhibited greater proof of care for the avoidance of inaccuracies, and had shown less evidence of a bias which has (without doubt unconsciously to its author, for I impute no want of good faith) deflected every argument in one direction. And as young children and very few persons utterly incapable of forming an opinion of their own could be expected to take such a book in hand, I would, with all due diffidence, suggest that it might have proved more acceptable if there had been less of that arbitrariness which is often found brandling Scripture statements as '*unhistorical*,' without explaining why.

I do not mean to say that the book is void of many weighty arguments, for if I did, preceding extracts would prove my error; but still there are places where a reader would like to know by what steps its author reaches so often the dannatory conclusion, 'This is improbable.' It would be beside my present remonstrance to remark here, what is but true, that if Scripture presents a revelation to the human race from a Being higher than man, we must expect to find therein things out of the usual course of events, and so far improbable. It may be more pertinent to say that the improbability of a thing must be always a matter of opinion; that there are degrees of probability and improbability; and that if everything we should have thought improbable were expunged from history, there would not be much of it left for our study.

Let us suppose that a truthful English history, written in our own times, of the twenty years following A.D. 1799, may by chance come before some Transatlantic critic for review eighteen centuries hence. Newspapers and other publications contemporary with the events recorded may, if so long preserved, afford him ample means of verifying its statements. But, for the sake of argument, let us imagine our critic deprived of such helps, and furnished with no better means for his purpose than we ourselves possess for verifying the statements in the gospels. A future Dr. Davidson under such circumstances would often find occasion to say, with quite as good cause as the present one does, 'This is improbable. This is un-historical.'

For instance, coming to the *second seizure of the fleet of Denmark*, would not his strain be somewhat as follows: 'This is not to be believed. It is merely a duplicate story of an event that there is no reason to doubt had really occurred. But it occurred once only, and it is here repeated with some variations to serve the purpose of the writer, whose object it was to sustain the credit of the British army. In fact, though most of the ancient records have perished, one or two contemporaneous speeches and rare pamphlets have been preserved which ignore the circumstance; for they often allude to "the unjustifiable" or "the outrageous seizure of the Danish fleet;" but I have never found in them the expression, "seizures of the Danish fleets." There is every reason to believe, as the writer says, that the English navy performed some really great exploits about the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that the destruction of the fleet of a generally friendly nation after bloody resistance was one of them. The English army, however, had had but few successes to boast of. This writer, therefore, in his wish to give it credit, ima-

gines a second expedition, in which the land forces are represented as doing the greater part of the work, six years after the first. In fact, he keeps up a kind of parallelism between fleet and army, just as the writer of the Acts does between the Apostle of the Circumcision and the Apostle of the Gentiles. Then, too, in the accounts of the few years after this mythical event, the *return of Buonaparte from Elba*,* and the enthusiasm with which he was hailed by his old soldiers, are things not to be credited. It is historical that the usurper's army had been overthrown by the vast Continental forces that had at length plucked up spirit to resist, after having learned from him the art of war; and that even before it had been destroyed the French military service, as this very writer had told us, had been rendered so unendurable by the exactions of the incessant and desolating wars of the Empire, that the men would mutilate themselves, or get taken prisoners, rather than fight in the ranks of the imperious chief. The writer, therefore, contradicts himself in describing the army as devoted to Napoleon at the latter end of his career. The account of the journey through France to the port of embarkation for Elba is truly depicted as having been accomplished amidst the execrations of the people over whom he had tyrannised; and it is correctly stated that their hostile manifestations became at length so alarming that Buonaparte felt obliged to cover his figure with a disguise, as a preservative from personal violence. Can we believe then that when a few months had passed, this very man, now elderly and timid, would return and place himself boldly in the hands of men who had just expelled him—that he should be received by them with acclamations—that he should make a triumphal progress to the capital; and that, after a few weeks spent there, he should go forth at the head of an enthusiastically attached army; and that that army, magnificently equipped and most valiant, should have been destroyed by a rather smaller force of English and Prussians, under a British general? The whole thing is a transparent invention of these boastful islanders, who wished to claim just such credit for their commander by land as their naval hero had gained by sea. They would have it said, too, that they had enchained the mighty conqueror of Europe in a possession of their own. The imprisonment on a solitary rock in the midst of the ocean is unhistorical. We can no more believe in both islands, Elba and St. Helena, as lock-ups that held the great Napoleon, than we can in

* I am not aware if these points are raised in 'Historic Doubts,' a book I have never had the advantage of seeing.

two distinct miracles of the loaves and fishes, two cleansings of the Temple in Jerusalem, and two different deliveries of the Lord's Prayer.'

Whether these illustrations may be deemed pertinent or not, perhaps I have said enough to show why, after looking into Dr. Davidson's book with the respect due to the work of so distinguished an author, I can place no confidence in his general guidance, and why I feel justified in declining to withdraw what I had written about Christ's words in the Gospels.

POSTSCRIPT.—The Author thinks it well to mention that, till some weeks after the MS. of the foregoing had left his hands, he had never had the pleasure of meeting with the *Boyle Lectures for 1869*, by the Rev. Stanley Leathes, who also, remarkably enough, devotes an *Appendix* to an examination of statements put forth by Dr. Davidson. Some observations made therein, and some few in the *Appendix* herewith, are so much to the same effect, that the present writer might become liable to a charge of plagiarism were he not to take this means of stating that the foregoing was penned whilst he was in ignorance of the contents of Mr. Leathes' able work.

February. 1870.

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