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SABBATH EVENING READINGS.

S T . M A R K .

SABBATH EVENING READINGS

ON THE



NEW TESTAMENT.

BY THE

✓
REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D., F.R.S.E.,

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S T . M A R K .

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It is clearly gathered from other portions of the New Testament Scriptures that the author of this Gospel was called sometimes John — not John the Evangelist — and afterwards surnamed Mark, and was sister's son to Barnabas, and the son of Mary, a pious woman who lived in the midst of Jerusalem. He is alluded to by the Apostle Paul, whom he accompanied in many of his travels, as we find recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. He was also the very intimate companion of the Apostle Peter, who frequently makes mention of him; and it is universally believed, as it is recorded by most of the ancient Patristic authorities, that this Gospel was not only inspired by God, like the rest of the four, but that it was also composed under the *surveillance* and superintendence of the Apostle Peter himself.

We shall trace a distinction between this Gospel and that according to St. Matthew. St. Matthew's Gospel was plainly written for the Jews, and therefore it traces the genealogy of Christ through all the Jewish families upwards to Adam; and you will notice that in it there are allusions to Jewish customs, rites, and ceremonies, without the least explanatory remark appended to them, which plainly indicates that Matthew wrote for a people who understood the rites, ceremonies, and customs to which he refers. I do not know whether I mentioned, in my introductory remarks on St. Matthew's Gospel, that the universal statement of the early Fathers is, that he wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew, or rather in the Syro-Chaldaic language, which was a dialect of the Hebrew spoken by the Jews in the days of our blessed Lord. It is said by some of the Fathers, that it was translated subsequently into Greek by Matthew himself; by others it is said that it was translated by some other writer. St. Mark's Gospel was written, plainly, originally in Greek, being a Gospel meant peculiarly for the Gentiles; and in it we have less of the personal history of Jesus, and more of his official character. Thus, whilst Matthew begins with the genealogy of Christ the Son of David, the Gospel of Mark begins with the herald of Jesus, and his temptation, and miracles. We shall find, by a careful comparison of the four Gospels, that whatever was their common origin,—and I believe the writers of them were independent witnesses to the facts which they recorded, and that they have recorded these facts each in his own lan-

guage and phraseology, but guided, governed, and directed by the Holy Spirit, — we have Christ in four different lights, portrayed, if I may so speak, in four different aspects, described by four different narrators; one a profile, another a full face, the other three quarters of the face, and another almost entirely relating to the official character and functions of Jesus. So that we have Christ set forth in all lights, and seen at all angles, and exhibited in all his glory by four competent witnesses, describing in their own way, but inspired by the common Spirit, the wonderful things of the Son of God.

This Gospel begins at once by the statement, "The beginning of the Gospel," that is plainly, the beginning of the narrative of the good news, "of Jesus Christ;" not, as Matthew says, "the Son of David," for it was not St. Mark's purpose to delineate him in that character, but "the Son of God." Now this expression means, in the New Testament, invariably a divine person. To call one "the Son of God," was equivalent in Jewish hearing to calling him "God over all blessed for evermore." It is therefore very beautiful that the Gospel which delineates his sorrows as a man, should have for its preface his glory as the Son of God. It is very interesting that that Gospel which tells us how deep he sunk in the miry clay, when the weight and pressure of our iniquities was upon him, should begin with a declaration of his majesty and glory, that we might never lose sight of the God in his deepest sorrows, or forget that he was the Equal of the Father, when he endured the cross for us and our salvation.

St. Mark refers to the ministry of John, as that ministry was predicted in the prophet Malachi, ch. iii., and again in Isaiah xl., and both fulfilled in John baptizing in the wilderness, and preaching the baptism of repentance as a preparation for Christ, in whom alone there was remission of sins.

We read that "there went out unto him all the land of Judæa." That expression "all," I may state, is used in Scripture not in that rigid sense in which theologians would sometimes interpret it. You recollect that, in the book of Exodus, we read that the hail smote all the herbs in the land of Egypt; but we find afterwards some herbs, plants, and trees that were spared. The word "all," therefore, was used in the sense of all sorts of plants, trees, and herbs. So, again, we have in one of the Epistles the apostle exhorting that prayers should be made for all men, for all in authority, for kings, since God will have "all men" to be saved. If it were God's absolute fiat that the whole of the world should be saved, Universalism would be true; but, plainly, the word "all" is used in the sense of all sorts of men: for he exhorts that prayers be made for all in authority, that is, for kings as well as subjects. And here it cannot be supposed that the whole population of Judæa, numbering somewhere about three, four, or five millions, went out to John, but that all sorts of the inhabitants — Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, rich, poor, great, and lowly — went out to hear John the Baptist. We read next a description of John's raiment. To show that he was the preacher of a stern testimony, he was clothed in the severest and the

simplest habits, — clothed with camel's hair; and it is said that he ate, — not to indicate his taste, but the place of his habitation, — locusts and wild honey. He did not eat locusts and wild honey as a monk eats black bread, as an expiatory duty, but because he could find nothing else in the place in which he was constrained to live.

He preached, not himself, but, like a faithful minister, his Master. He detached the people's thoughts from the herald, and tried to teach them of One who came after him, — "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." When a traveller came to an eastern house, his shoes or sandals were unloosed and removed by the servant, that the dusty feet might be washed, and the weary traveller thus refreshed. Well, John says, The gap between me, the pioneer, and my great Master is so great, that I am not worthy to do the humblest office for him — so great is his glory, and so lowly is my function.

Then we read that "Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan." Now some say that he was immersed, others that he was sprinkled, and others that water was poured upon his head. If we take ancient pictures, which are in this matter apocryphal, we shall come to the conclusion that the water was poured upon his head. It does not seem probable that he was immersed; and at all events there is a magnificent latitude in the language of Scripture, which never so describes a ceremony, that rigid conformity in jots and tittles shall be our duty. On the

contrary, it leaves the ceremony so largely and widely delineated, that this custom may prevail in the north, and that custom in the south, provided the substance be observed. The special ritual peculiarities are left to the habits and customs, the taste and convenience of the people. Certainly, if immersion were universal (and I am not finding fault with it; I am only finding fault with those who absolutely insist upon it), it would be a very awkward custom in Greenland; it would be very unsuitable in the severe frosts of winter; and surely that religion which is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, never would have enforced a rigid ceremony impracticable in Greenland, and practicable only where there is a warm sun and a balmy climate, in English Junes, or in eastern or equatorial lands. It therefore seems not worth disputing whether it was immersion or sprinkling: there is something better than either — righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. I do not wish to make severe and controversial criticisms upon any section of the Christian Church, still less when in that section there was an Andrew Fuller, a Robert Hall, and many others eminent for their learning and their talents; but I must add, it is not sufficient to quote this passage to prove that adult baptism is alone lawful. Our Lord's baptism was not our baptism at all. Christian baptism was not yet instituted; it was not instituted till after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and therefore cannot have been practised before it was in existence. The only baptism that existed was John's; and so unsatisfac-

tory was this baptism, that we read in the Acts of the Apostles that they who had received John's baptism had to receive Christian baptism, showing that the two were not identical at all. Therefore, it is evident that the baptism of Jesus was not what we call Christian baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Then, what was it? It was the commencement of his official ministry; it was his initiation as the Great Teacher of the glad tidings of everlasting life; and when He was thus baptized, we read that the Holy Spirit descended upon him, not to sanctify him — for the Holy Spirit was in him in all fulness from his birth — but to qualify him for his office, proving that this baptism was introductory to an official function. The Spirit descended like a dove — some say in the shape of a dove; certainly in one passage it looks very like that, for there it is said, *σωματικῶς*, in the bodily form of a dove. Yet one does not like to admit, without some very clear evidence, that He took any visible form, or revealed himself in the form of any animal or bird whatever. It seems not directly contradicted that the Spirit descended with the speed of a dove, and lighted on his head; “and there came a voice from heaven,” the voice of the Father, “saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Now, here we have the whole Trinity. We have Christ the Subject, the Spirit the Anointer, and the Father uttering from heaven, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

We find next the record of the temptation of

Jesus. The word "driven" is too severe a translation of the original. It ought to be, "was carried away" — was led away, not by his own choice, nor yet by external force, but in the providence and by the direction of God. He was led into the wilderness, there to be tempted. Is there not here a singular contrast? The world was lost in a beautiful garden, amid a balmy air, amid all created things — birds and beasts in accord with man, who was in sweet accord with God; and the world was regained, and Paradise restored, in a desert, the opposite to a garden, amid savage wild beasts that were at war with man, because man was at war with God, and by the solitary Second Adam strong in the strength of Him on whose mission and embassy he came. We read that angels there ministered to him; and at last Jesus came forth, when John was put into prison. As soon as the morning-star had set, and this grand Sun had risen, we hear that he preached in Galilee the very first thing, not the law, not repentance, but "the Gospel of the kingdom." First, the kingdom of God is at hand, that is, the good tidings, salvation: therefore, because of this, repent. John's preaching was, "Repent, in order to reach the Gospel," a preparatory process. The preaching of Jesus was, "Here is the Gospel, the glad tidings: therefore, and subsequent to this, repent, and be saved."

We have then his choice of some of his followers to be ministers. "He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after

me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Under a divine impulse they resigned their nets, left off their profits, and followed Jesus. We then find him calling James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who appears to have been a person of more affluent circumstances, from the hint in the 20th verse, that the ship was left with the hired servants, that James and John might undertake the ministry of the Gospel.

Jesus went into the synagogue and taught, regarding every place as sacred that would open a door to receive him. The scribes and Pharisees, with all their forms, were much more liberal than many Christians are in the present day. When they saw in the synagogue a gifted man, who was known to be able to address the assembly, it was common to ask him to address the people, and tell them something that would comfort them, and do them good. And I may state for the special information of our Tractarian friends, that in the first three centuries of the Christian Church, nothing was more common than for the presiding minister, or bishop if you like, when he happened to espy in his congregation a pious and gifted layman, to invite him into the pulpit to preach the Gospel to the people. Now, how far the Tractarians may approve of this practice their own writings will determine. At all events, if they will be ante-Nicene, and primitive in all things, it is a pity that they should take so many husks, and leave so many of the useful kernels that they might find, if they would be at the trouble to search for them.

Jesus was addressed by a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit. I stated before that demoniac possessions were realities in the days of our Lord. I do not believe there are any instances of such now. Satan adapts himself to the phase in which God's kingdom appears. When God became incarnate, Satan became incarnate also. When Moses did miracles in Egypt, the devil, by the magicians, did his pranks or miracles also. So when God was incarnate, Satan appeared also in his way incarnate. And now that we have the dispensation of the Spirit, we have Satan seducing, tempting, beguiling, deceiving, but not in the shape of demoniac literal possessions. That this was a literal and personal demon in the man is perfectly obvious from the language. The devil said to Jesus, "Art thou come to destroy us? What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." That creed is too clear for a poor Jew to have given utterance to. It was the utterance of one who was orthodox, for Satan knows vastly more than we know; but also of one who was hateful and malignant, and therefore dreading the approach of the Holy One of God. Then Jesus rebuked, not the man, but the unclean spirit, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him." The devil will not let go a victim without a struggle. Satan will not be driven out of this world without great opposition. The great Western apostasy, which is the nearest approximation to Satan manifest in the flesh,

will not resign its foothold without a desperate struggle that will rend the world, out of which it must be ultimately driven. But what an evidence of awful malignity it is, that when the devil could no longer hold the ground he had occupied, he would damage that ground before he would resign it! "And they were all amazed," and his fame, as you might expect, spread everywhere.

And in the 30th verse, we find what must be very startling tidings to Pio Nono and the members of his communion; for there we read that "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." If Peter were to present himself to the Pope in 1853, he would be excluded by force from the Vatican, and be regarded as an apostate and schismatic, unworthy of holding the keys, or wearing the tiara of Rome: for plainly Peter was married; and his wife so far from being disapproved by our Lord, was, on the contrary, highly approved, for He cured her mother of a fever. So little did Jesus disapprove of Peter's mother-in-law suffering her daughter to marry Peter, that she ministered to Jesus, and Jesus accepted it. It is thus matter-of-fact that Peter, the first alleged Pope, was married, and it is also plain that Jesus did not disapprove it. There is no evidence that Peter sent her into a convent, an institution which, by the way, did not exist, or that she was separated from him by divorce; for she had done nothing wrong, except in the traditions of the popes, and the blind opinions of misguided men.

We then read (and what a beautiful thought it is!) that Jesus went early in the morning to a soli-

tary place, and there prayed for strength and refreshment for all the labors and the trials that were before him; and after he had so prayed, and gained strength from communion with his Father, he preached.

The next incident of which we read, is the cure of a leper. Now leprosy was the great type of sin; and such was its nature, that it was incurable by human power. The office of the priest in the ancient economy was, not to cure the leper, but to pronounce upon the leper whether he was cured or not. No one was allowed to touch a leper; no one would have attempted to do so; and he who pretended to cure leprosy would have been accused of blasphemy by the Jews, because they held that leprosy could be cured by God himself only. Well, Jesus touched the leper, which was sin according to Jewish superstition, if Christ was not God; and he said, "I will; be thou clean" — that was blasphemy, if Jesus was not God: and he ordered the leper to go and show himself to the priest, not to please the priest, but that he might receive the certificate that he was cured, and mingle again with the people. Now, the cure of that leper was clearly the act of One who was God. There is no medium between the awful conclusion that Jesus was a blasphemer, and the glorious and blessed conviction that He was very God manifest in the flesh.

NOTE. — [8.] Matt. iii. 1-12; Luke iii. 1-18. The object of Mark being to relate the official life and ministry of the Lord, he begins

with His baptism, and, as a necessary introduction to it, with the preaching of John the Baptist. His account of John's baptism has much in common with both Matthew and Luke; but, from the additional prophecy quoted in verse 2, is certainly independent and distinct.

Κύψας λῦσαι the expression is common to Mark, Luke, and John. It amounts to the same as bearing the shoes — for he who did the last, would necessarily be also employed in loosing and taking off the sandal. But the variety is itself indicative of the independence of Matthew and Mark of one another.

The additional intensity of temptation at the end of that period is expressed in Matthew by the tempter coming to Him, — becoming visible and audible. Perhaps the being with the beasts may point to one form of temptation, viz. that of terror, which was practised on Him; but of the inward trials who may speak?

CHAPTER II.

POPULARITY OF THE PREACHING OF JESUS — THE CROWD IN THE AREA — THE PALSIED CURED — THE ONLY SIN-FORGIVER — PULPITS OF THE GREAT PREACHER — CONSECRATED GROUND — CALL OF MATTHEW — DINING, WHEN AND WITH WHOM — FASTING — OLD WINE AND NEW BOTTES — THE SABBATH.

WHATEVER was the nature of the close of the ministry of our Lord, it is certain, from this chapter and other passages that are parallel with it, that the early days of his ministry were most bright, and that the popular mind responded to it most enthusiastically wherever he went. It is a singular fact, that whilst the priests represented by the Pharisees cavilled, whilst the lawyers tried to entrap him, the common people, the mass of the community, heard him gladly, and were profited by his lessons.

It seems that on this occasion, as he left the desert and entered into Capernaum, the rumor went abroad that he was in the house. An eastern residence was sometimes three houses joined together, and a court in the middle; and the probability from the description of what followed is, that Jesus was in the court, or open area, in the centre of the three buildings, there speaking to the crowd that had assembled together, if peradventure they could hear him. And when the crowd came in such great numbers, that there was no more room to receive them, he did not

repel them, afraid of the heat, the pressure, or the tumult, but "he preached the word unto them." What word? The word that was in the Old Testament Scripture, written, and by him and through him illustrated, unfolded, and applied in all those beautiful and instructive lessons which are scattered throughout the Scriptures, like pearls on the floor of the deep, like precious stones in the bosom of the earth.

When they saw him thus engaged, they brought to him one palsied; and when they could not come nigh to him for the press, they uncovered the roof; that is, probably, the curtain or awning that was stretched over the court or area to intercept the heat of the sun. They untied the fastenings of this, and they let down the bed, a sort of chair or couch, on which the sick man lay, into the midst of the place. And when Jesus saw their faith, instead of saying they were uncourteous or rude, or had violated the usages of civilized society, which certainly they had, he was rejoiced to find in the friends of the sick of the palsy, that faith which purifieth the heart, and overcometh all the difficulties of the world; and without rebuke, or a remonstrance, or the expression of a single word of disapproval, he said, in accents the most glorious that ever were pronounced on earth, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Now, this absolution was not a declaration of what was, or a wish for what might be, but a judicial sentence of what took effect the moment the words were uttered.

Then certain of the scribes, who were sitting there

always watching, not for a word that would do them good, but for a ground on which they might cavil or object to Jesus, reasoned in themselves, and on this occasion most justly, because on the supposition that Jesus was a mere man the language that he used was absolute blasphemy, and they said, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" It is plain that bad as the Pharisees were, they were no Romanists; they did not believe that a priest could forgive sins; they did not believe that it was the function or the office of the most exalted in their land to pronounce a judicial sentence upon the state of any man.

When Jesus knew their reasoning, what did he say to them? He did not say, "I am only a man, and I have merely wished for absolution, or predicted absolution;" but he showed evidently that he had power to forgive sins; not that their reasoning was false, but that it was true, and that he forgave sin because he was more than man, the Son of God, the brightness of His glory, the image of His person. And therefore he said to them, "Now, I will put the matter to a test—whether is it easier to heal the disorders of the soul, or to heal the infirmities of the body?" He did not imply that the one was easier than the other; but he taught them that One who could do the one, they might fairly presume was God, and could, therefore, do the other also; and therefore he asked them which they would wish to be done. He knew that the forgiveness of sin had no visible effect. No man by gazing on a man's face could tell whether the judicial sentence of absolution

had taken effect or not; but any one seeing the healing of the sick could see whether the command of our Lord had taken effect. And therefore he says, "By an expression of power that your outward senses can judge of, I will show that I can heal the body with a word, and leave you by a reasonable inference to conclude that I can restore the soul to its pristine relationship to God." And therefore, to show that the inner work had taken place, he showed them the outer man restored to strength and vigor; and they were constrained to say, "We never saw it on this fashion."

After this, "he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them." He did not say, "I will teach only in the temple, for it is holy ground," which it was peculiarly; but he evidently held the publican's table, the home of Capernaum, the sea-shore of Galilee, fit pulpits from which to proclaim the words of everlasting life, and to convey instruction to the minds and hearts of the people. It is holy work that makes holy ground. A builder may raise an edifice, but religion alone can make it a sanctuary. An orator may collect an audience, but living religion alone can make it a church. It is the work that consecrates the place; it is not the place that consecrates the work. It is right that there should be places set apart and sequestered from the din of this world, and from the traffic of the exchange, and devoted to holy lessons and holy services; but we must never think for one moment that there is any spot of ground so holy, that there we must think right

thoughts, and speak right words, and do good deeds, but that the moment we are outside, the rest of the ground is so profane that we may live just as we like. The whole earth was consecrated for the fruits of Christianity when Jesus the Son of God allied himself to our humanity, was born of a virgin, took into union with himself a part of the dust of the world, and consecrated all space for his temple, all time for his worship.

As Jesus passed by he saw Levi, that is, the writer of the first Gospel, or Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom — the custom-house, or place appointed for receiving the tribute that belonged to Cæsar; and he said unto him, "Follow me." One must suppose that he and Matthew had met before, and that Matthew had heard Jesus teaching on previous occasions; because one can scarcely think that the publican would have resigned his lucrative office, and followed the homeless Nazarene, unless his mind had been enlightened by the lessons of Jesus. The moment he heard the words, "Follow me," he followed him. This was not a sudden conversion, but the result of a long previous process. I have not much faith in what are called sudden conversions. I believe that what we call so are only the results of a long previous process, just as the harvest-home is the result of the sowing of the seed in spring. Impressions have been made, and forces have accumulated in the sanctuary of the soul, that on the appropriate occasion, fixed in the purposes of God, produce that apparently, but not really instantaneous effect, that ends in conversion to God and obedi-

ence to Christ. But you will notice that when Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me," Matthew did not say, "Lord, I am not sure that I am elect." If he had said so, our Lord would have probably replied, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." It is remarkable, if you will notice the simplicity of the cases all throughout the New Testament, that in every instance those metaphysical questions that Christians perplex their minds about, were never thought of. Instant obedience to what Christ says is duty; and wherever he says "Do," there he gives strength and grace adequate to performance. If a parent were to hold out to his child an orange, the child would never say, "I wonder if I may calculate upon really getting it, or whether it is meant for me;" but it instantly holds out its hand, and takes the orange. So we are children, and God is our Father; and except we become as little children, we are told, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. God says, "Believe — live — do." Do not discuss the metaphysics of the question, but just believe as God says, and do as God prescribes, and in the effort you will find the strength that is adequate to the occasion.

We read next that Jesus went, and sat down, and dined with publicans and sinners. But is this a precedent for us to go and dine with those to whom we entertain the strongest religious objection? I answer, when Jesus dined with these, he went not as a companion to share in their mere conviviality, but as an instructor of the ignorant, a physician for the sick, a Saviour to the sinful; and if we go with

the same motive, and with the same design, we are warranted in going also: that is to say, if we go deliberately to do good, designedly to benefit those who are about us, and with whom we are associated, then we are warranted in doing so; but if we go where we have no call in providence to be, but only to gratify our own passions, or our own mere carnal appetites and desires, it is a question that will be very soon settled when looked at in the light of the sanctuary, whether we have any right to be there. The scribes and the Pharisees, startled by what seemed to be an inexplicable contradiction to the rest of his teaching, said, "How is it that he eateth with publicans and sinners?" Not that they themselves were better; they added to the sins of the publicans and sinners the sin of hypocrisy, and, compared with publicans and sinners, were the guiltier of the two. But when Jesus saw it, he gave them an explanation of his conduct, which is to us a precedent to explain ours when any one finds fault with it:—"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. Well, by your own showing, you scribes and Pharisees admit that these men are publicans and sinners. The worse they are, the more need they have of curative treatment. The more sick they are, the more need they have of a physician. I am not come to call the righteous, as you vainly suppose yourselves to be, but those who feel themselves to be sinners, unto repentance." How beautiful is this reply! How rich in the most exalted common sense! How consolatory to us, that because we are sinners, therefore Christ invites

us to be saved! If you are satisfied that you are righteous enough already, you have no lot or part in this; but if you feel that you are sinners, here is the Saviour.

Well, when this objection was disposed of, their prolific minds (the imagination fruitful, because the heart was depraved) suggested another objection — “Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” That is, fasting is not forbidden: it is proper enough. At one time it would be sin to fast; at another time it would be obedience to what seems the mind and purpose of God. In other words, fasting is not simply abstaining from food; and during the season of Lent, as it is often practised: to abstain from food is but a part of the fasting that is prescribed in the Word of God. Those who would be ceremonially scriptural ought to clothe themselves in sackcloth, and put ashes on their heads, and abstain from food — the three always go together in Scripture. It will not do to choose the most convenient of the three. If you will be literal interpreters, you must take all, or you must observe the spirit of the prescription, and not the mere dead and uninformative letter. Besides, it is always noticed that the greatest advocates of fasting do it because they think it is merit, or that it is

an expiation, and blots out so much sin. But it has no merit; and if it had, we do not need it. If we are Christians, we are clothed in the spotless righteousness of the Son of God, complete in him. And, secondly, if proposed as an expiation, we answer, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But a more enlightened person says, "I fast, because I think it is a means of helping my communion with God, of assisting my study of his holy Word, and of enabling me to master the sins that beset me." I answer, if your fasting contributes to these, by all means fast. Either abstain from food, or clothe yourself with sackcloth, or heap dust and ashes on your head, provided it be not only not sinful, but beneficial; but if I should find that it does not in my case contribute to such good results, you should not say that I am guilty of sin because I do not do as you do. In one case fasting may be useful, because subservient to an ulterior result; in another case it may not be duty, because it is not conducive to the end we have in view. Let us neither feast as in the Carnival, nor fast as in Lent, but remember that the kingdom of God is not meat, nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And we are told, in a very beautiful passage that is worth recollecting, what is the nature of the fast that God, after all, prefers. He says (Isaiah lviii. 5-7), "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this

the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" It seems to me, therefore, that the best fasting in Lent would not be an attack upon the stomach, but an attack on the pocket; that the most acceptable fast in Lent would be to contribute more munificently to the claims of charity, beneficence, and truth: for the fast that God has chosen is not abstinence from food, or punishment of self, but richer liberality in clothing the naked and feeding the hungry; and then "thy light shall break forth like brightness, and thy righteousness like the noon-day."

Our Lord then shows the reasonableness of his counsels on fasting. He says, "This is not the time: the Bridegroom is present at this moment: soon he will be taken away, and then your sorrow will suggest your fasting; but, in the mean time, I would show you the inexpediency of fasting now. No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment;" that is, if the old garment by long wearing has become thin, if you sew a new piece on it, the old garment will give way, and the new carry with it a part of the old, and the rent will be positively made worse, by being made wider. And so in reference to new wine, it should not be put into old bottles. And here I may notice, what I have

called attention to before, that the wine of the Jews was indisputably alcoholic and fermented. The bottle was made of skin, and the wine was put in it before the process of fermentation had begun; and in a very few hours, in that climate, the carbonic acid gas was evolved, and distended the skin; and therefore, if you were to take new wine, and put it into an already expanded bottle, the skin, having previously reached its greatest distension, would burst. And this teaches us that there is an appropriateness in every thing; and that only when things are done in the best way, and at the best time, are they most conducive to really and ultimately beneficent and good results.

I notice here the allusion to Abiathar the high-priest. It is found that Abiathar was not the high-priest at this time. Abimelech was the high-priest: Abiathar was his son; and Mark calls him the high-priest by anticipation. Napoleon was called the first consul once, but our historians would speak of him as the emperor. Thus, Abiathar is called the high-priest by one of those anticipatory expressions which are common to all historians. It is not, therefore, a contradiction of fact, but one of the indirect and latent proofs of the genuineness of the narrative.

CHAPTER II. 27.

THE SABBATH — MAN'S MISTAKES.

“THE Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” is one of the popular and prevalent aphorisms of the day. It is a text, in my mind, beautiful, instructive, comforting; but as interpreted by many, one must suppose, not fairly, but with an object in view, the Sabbath would be displaced from its pure and lofty position, and degraded to be the slave of the passions, and to pander to the prejudices of mankind.

I do not at present enter on the question about the transfer of the Lord's day, whether it should be the seventh or the first; I will turn your attention on a subsequent occasion to that. I assume at present that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath; and on that supposition, — which you must grant me at present, because I do not stop to prove it, as I could easily do, — I proceed to show in what respect we must suppose that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Man requires for his body, as every one feels, periodical seasons of repose. The body is exhausted with the toils and continuous fatigue of the week, and it needs a season of respite, restoration, and repose, without which its machinery will soon be

worn out, and its great purposes arrested long before their proper meridian. The night is repose, and every one feels that to be essential at the close of the day; but a season besides the night seems, not only from the institution of God, but from the experience of man, to be necessary also. It has been actually ascertained as a matter-of-fact, that a horse worked seven days without intermission, will neither live so long nor do so much work as a horse that is worked six days, and left to rest one in every seven. I think the horse, as a brute, may have the first, second, third, or any other day of the week for his holiday, but it is essential to him for his greatest efficiency that he should have a seventh portion of his time for rest. Our time for rest is that portion that is expressly assigned by God, and our position is connected with our moral elevation and improvement; but if a horse rests the seventh portion of his time, that would seem just—less will not do, more is not required. Every one has found that a respite is necessary to the full strength of his bodily organization. In fact, every organ in the body requires rest; or if not absolute cessation, at least change of posture. For instance, if the arm were held in one position for an hour the fatigue would be insupportable; but the same muscles will hold out all day long without being exhausted, if there is variety of action and of movement. The objection has been made, that there are some organs in the human body that have no repose—the heart and lungs for instance. But the fact is, the heart has sixty working days and sixty Sabbaths in the course of

a minute. The heart stops and starts, and stops and starts — its weekday and its Sabbath, its work and its repose, in alternate and uninterrupted succession; and so with the lungs; as if God would teach us by the law of our physical organization, that there must be alternate rest and exertion, repose and action, in order that the full measure of health and vigor may be realized by man. And the rest that our physical economy seems to require, is not so much in these periodical seasons absolute cessation from acting, as a change and variety in that action. The night is the absolute suspension of almost all the powers, physical, intellectual, and moral; but the Sabbath is not prostration of all the powers, but a change in their action, a variety, if I may so speak, in their development. The Sabbath upon earth is something like the everlasting Sabbath in heaven. It is said of the saints in one passage, "They rest;" and in another, "They rest not day and night;" as if rest and resting not, that is, rest and joy from variety of action, were the great repose that is enjoyed by the people of God hereafter. And I believe it has been proved — indeed, I read it in the calculation of a very celebrated statist — that not only is it the case with the horse, but that if the human frame be employed chiefly at the same occupation, it will not last as long as it otherwise would. The law is struck into our constitution, that after days of labor there shall be days of rest. The divine obligation is, "Work six days;" the divine obligation is, "Repose one." It is as much a divine duty to work as to

rest. He who will not work should not eat, and he who will not work cannot enjoy the Sabbath.

But I have assumed, in these introductory remarks, that man has a body only, and that repose, consisting in variety of action, is all that he requires; but you must remember, in the next place, that man is an intellectual being. Every one who earns his bread in any shape, or does his duty in that sphere in which God has placed him, is a working man. It is a great mistake to think that the ploughman, the weaver, or the carpenter, are the only working men. They work with their hands; the postman works with his feet; the lawyer works with his head, as does also the minister; but every one of us, in some shape or other, is a working man. Well, we have not only hands to employ, and a body to be fatigued, but we have an intellect to employ, and an intellect also to be fatigued, and capable of an exhaustion far more painful, and far more perilous, than that of the mere animal material. Now, then, in the case of those who work with the intellect all the week, there is needed a day of repose. The intellect, exhausted with its pursuits, whether they be reading, writing, thinking, or study, needs repose. But what is repose to the intellect? I dare say many of you can bear out my own experience, that if all employment of the intellect be withdrawn, the excitement of an absolute vacancy is the greatest of all. If I have been working hard with my intellect for eleven months in the year, and if just for the twelfth month I let it lie perfectly fallow, it is the most exhausting

experiment I can make. I find that I must not let the mind have absolute inaction, but that, during the holiday, I must turn the intellect to other thoughts and other subjects. Rest is secured for the intellect, not by apathy, but by variety of action, of thought, and of application. Now it seems to me, that in this respect the Sabbath fits most beautifully the literary man. Exhausted by the intellectual toils of the week, he comes into the sanctuary; and the voice of psalms, the supplications at the footstool, the exposition of the chapter, and the unfolding of the glorious gospel in the sermon, direct all his thoughts out of the beaten thoroughfare into new, beautiful, and fragrant by-ways and side paths; and he is refreshed and invigorated, not by repose or stagnation, which is impossible, but by that variety and change of thought, which contributes efficiently to the health and vigor of the faculties of the mind. Hence, the person who is engaged in writing for the press, he who is engaged in parliamentary debates, the individual who is involved in political or legal disputes, will always find upon the Sabbath day, not the same subject continued, but a totally different subject taken up, the greatest refreshment for his mind, and the completest repose after the exhaustion and fatigue of the week. And in the case of those people who have no intellectual exertion during the week — those who work with the feet, the hand, or the body — then to them it would be the greatest calamity to allow the intellect to become dormant. If the working man is to do nothing but hew wood, and dig, or

perform any other manual labor, his intellect will become dormant. Let your hand never be used, and the muscles will die. Let any one limb or member of the body never be put in action, and it will lose all its power, vitality, and vigor. And so, let the intellect never be exerted, — the hand doing all, and the intellect passive, — and the result will be, that you will degrade our nation into a mass of serfs, by preventing the development and exercise of its intellectual powers ; but, on the other hand, by bringing them to the house of God, and enabling them to think, not upon the current topics of a day, but upon the solemn subjects of eternity, you keep the intellect in healthy, vigorous, and useful exercise. The intellect, that during six days has been very much in apathy, on the seventh day is drilled and exercised in the most important and awakening topics that can engage the human soul.

But I have looked at man, first, as merely an animal, secondly, as merely intellectual ; but I have to look at him in a third capacity, as having a soul and a conscience. Man is surely not merely a beast of burden ; surely he is not a mere hack for the literary press ; surely it is not God's mind that he should merely lay down rails, and sink shafts, and run errands, and then die. He has a soul ; the business of eternity is in his hands. He has a Saviour to believe on, a God to serve, and an eternity to aspire to. And if so, it is surely necessary that the wheels of Mammon should stand still, that the business of the week should be left in the counting-house, and that the soul at least once a week, should breathe

the air, and bask in the sunshine of that better and brighter land, in the expectation of which we are strangers and pilgrims here, looking for a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

And therefore, in all the threefold aspects of man, a period of some sort of repose seems essential; and in the last capacity the Sabbath is the time for learning the way to heaven, and how to overcome the difficulties and obstructions that are in the way; a day for leaving the tent and reposing in the tabernacle; for shutting the ledger, and opening the Bible; for leaving behind us the dust and the excitement of the world, and having, not a holiday, but a holy day of communion and fellowship with God, with eternity, with Jesus, with the Bible, with all that can benefit and bless us as immortal and responsible creatures. Thus, the Sabbath is made for man. If he be a mere animal for eating and drinking, and no more, then let him eat, and drink, and sleep on the Sabbath. If he be a mere intellectual creature, then let him go to the Museum, or the Crystal Palace, or read the newspaper. That will gratify and satisfy his intellect. But if he be, in addition to all this, a spiritual, responsible, and immortal being, then the bread that perisheth will not feed his soul, the splendid contents of the Crystal Palace will not satisfy the heart. He needs to come into contact with a higher, a better, and more glorious element, — the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures, — means of salvation as they are preached from the pulpit on every Sabbath, in every sanctuary in the land. If, then, the Sabbath is thus

made for man, in the very highest and noblest sense of that expression; if it is made, not for a section of man, but for the whole man; if it is meant and made to furnish him with the means of his progress, not as an animal only, nor as an intellectual being only, but as an immortal and responsible being, before whom an eternity of joy, or an eternity of sorrow, stretch their everlasting ages, it seems to me that the Sabbath is not adequately appreciated, nor properly spent, unless the chief portion of it be used and employed in thinking about the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and in communion with those truths that elevate, sanctify, and ennoble the hearts, habits, and lives of mankind. Believing that the Sabbath is thus made for man, no one can calculate the amount of benefit which it bestows upon the human family. The registers of eternity alone will show what a benefactress to mankind, what an ambassadress from heaven, the holy Christian Sabbath has been. Singular enough, one from whose lips you would not expect theology, (I mean Sir Walter Scott), has said: "If we believe the divine commandment, the Sabbath was instituted for the express purposes of religion alone; the time set apart as the Sabbath of the Lord, a day on which not to work our own works, nor to think our own thoughts. The precept is positive, the purpose is clear. For our eternal benefit a certain space of every week is appointed, which is sacred from all other avocations, save those imposed by necessity and mercy, and is to be employed in religious duties and privileges alone." We do not see the connec-

tion of the good with the Sabbath, but because unseen it is no less real. I have not the least doubt that an influence goes forth from every Sabbath, that tells upon the tone of our parliamentary debates, that influences our judicial decisions, and that imparts to all ranks and classes of men — the exchange, the counting-house, the transactions of the world — a sublimer, holier, and loftier tone. I am sure that our national prosperity, with all its fruits, has a connection with the Sabbath. The great tree seems to stand alone, but its roots below the ground stretch within the jurisdiction of the Sabbath, and are refreshed and invigorated there. There is a public conscience as well as public opinion; and how much of all that is purest, and holiest, and best in public opinion, may be traced to the influence of the Sabbath, and the exercises of the sanctuary, eternity, not time, will be able to unfold.

Apart from this, there is one beautiful feature in the Sabbath that ought never to be let go, and of all men the poor man ought to hold it fast for this feature only: it is this, — that on that day, in the house of prayer, the rich and the poor meet together, and in the enjoyment of a common peerage recollect their magnificent birthright, “The Lord is the Maker of us all.” It seems to me, that the Sabbath’s sanctuary is the weekly republic, the purest and holiest democracy, where the highest of the land are in nothing depressed, and where the lowliest and the humblest are elevated and ennobled. The Sabbath is not made for the noble, nor for the commoner, — not for the ruler, nor for the subject, — but for that

primeval nature, that manhood, which underlies all the distinctions of our world, and on which, as the only foundation, these distinctions can grow and make progress. In the house of prayer our gracious Queen is simply the woman, — the highest noble is simply the man; and the poorest and most forlorn orphan is nothing less. There they meet, and realize the thought, “God is the Maker of us all.” And I have often thought, that in the house of prayer there should be all the dead-level, if I may call it so, of the grave. I never like to see in the sanctuary a magnificent pew for a great man, and a very inferior pew for the poor man. I like the pews to have all one dead-level, and all to appear in the sanctuary unnoticed, undistinguished, unknown, as they shall appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, with nothing but the awful responsibility of saints or sinners in the sight of God. There, every valley should be exalted, and every hill should be made low; and the man with the gold ring, and the man that has none, should be equally welcome, and occupy, not a place low and levelling, but a platform of equal dignity.

But it would be altogether exaggerating the Sabbath, and lifting it from its own beautiful and proper position, if I were to say that it is the cause of all the social, national, mercantile, and commercial morality, that prevails in and characterizes our land. It is not the cause of it, but it is unquestionably the condition of it. Christianity is the nurse, the fountain, and the root of all; but the Sabbath seems to be the necessary condition of Christianity putting forth its benign and beneficent influences. Let me

explain this. It is the wind that moves the ship; the wind is the cause, progress is the effect, but the ocean on which it is afloat is the condition of the one and the other. Archimedes said he could move the world, if he had a place to plant the fulcrum. His strength would be the cause, the moving of the world would be the effect; but the place on which the lever rested would be the condition of it, which he could not have. So Christianity is the cause and source of all that is beautiful, holy, and beneficent in the land; these fruits are the magnificent results; but the condition of Christianity, exerting its widest, best, and mightiest effect, is the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and their solemn and holy observances. And surely you would not like to do away with this beautiful thought, that once a week this holy missionary from the skies should knock at your door; that on one day in the seven its beautiful light should shine into your casement; that once a week the chimes of its bells from ten thousand belfries should be heard ringing sweet music throughout the land,—“Let us go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall stand within Jerusalem.” “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.”

Man as an animal, an intellectual being, as a moral, immortal, responsible, and conscious being, must have a Sabbath; not of absolute stagnation, which would only be misery, but of such alteration of thought, of such variety of employment, that he

shall be refreshed while he is enlightened, strengthened while he rests, and helped on by bread that dieth not, till he reach the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

And now let me notice, for this is only touching some of the more prefatory and extrinsic features of the Christian Sabbath, that in every institution upon earth, appointed and organized by the ablest and wisest legislators of all times, periods of rest and repose, or, if you like, Sabbaths, have been devised for man. The Jewish economy, which it is the fashion to deride as an old and obsolete thing, to be consigned to Aaron's wardrobe, and to be worn no more by the world, not only gave the Jew every seventh day, but every seventh year, and every seventh seventh year, that is, every fiftieth year, which was a year of jubilee, when all that had gone wrong in the world's machinery might be readjusted, and put again in its proper place. Solon and Numa, the most celebrated legislators of ancient heathendom, appointed regular festivals for repose, and sequestration from the employments of the world, and for consecration to intellectual, moral, and other enjoyments.

Egypt, Persia, and Chaldea, had also their festivals. And I may add, what is still more striking, that the experiment once was made by the fanatics of 1793,—first, to expunge God from the world, and next, and most logically, to expunge his shadow, the Sabbath, from the earth; but Robespierre, after he had made the desperate experiment, was constrained to say, "The world will go to pieces if we

cannot find a God." And so strongly did they feel that without a Sabbath the world could not go on, that they said, "We will not have the Christian Sabbath, one day in seven; but, in order to uproot all its recollections and associations, and yet provide for man, we will have one day in ten." They therefore voted "No God," instead of the God of Abraham; and they voted "No Sabbath," but substituted for the Sabbath what they called the Decades, or every tenth day. But what was the result? In the course of a few years, as if the Sabbath was made for man, the world fell back into the olden ruts; it seized the Sabbath again as too precious to be let go; and all the infidelity of France has passed away, like a deluge that covered the earth for a season with wrecks; and the Sabbath, badly as it is observed, much as it is desecrated, still remains for France.

We have, in these facts, the strongest corroborative proofs that a day of rest is needed, that nations have found that they cannot do without it, and that it was found, when the experiment was made, that a tenth day was not enough, but that a seventh must be had recourse to. And now, what is the result at the present moment? That the first day of the week — be it right or wrong I do not stop to discuss — has so rooted itself upon the history of the world, has so interwoven its very fibres and roots with the human mind, the human conscience, and the human heart, that there is no question that that day will be observed as a holiday, if it be not observed as a holy day, for generations yet to come. I do not believe

that the working classes, however much some of them may be mistaken in connection with these subjects, will ever give up their Sabbath to the service of man. I do not believe that the shops will all be open upon the Sunday. I do not think that human nature could make so gigantic a sacrifice at any shrine, as the awful and perilous sacrifice of its Sabbaths. Well then, if this be so, if all are let loose upon that day, if the shops are shut, business suspended, work given over, and the working-dress laid aside, as the day will be, and now is, it will be either employed as a holiday, or as a holy day; it will either be (and mark my words, for they are drawn from knowing what human nature is) a day for the Sabbath of the Lord, or a day for the saturnalia of Rome; it will either be a day for a gigantic blessing, or a day for a national curse. The Sabbath will be employed for some purpose. A man cannot lie down and sleep all the Sabbath, he cannot spend all the day in the public-house, bad as that would be. He must have something to do on that day; and it will either be a curse or a blessing to him — a day for pandemonium, or a day preparatory for Paradise.

Let us, who profess to have that which can sanctify and sweeten it, so commend the Sabbath to those that are about us, that they shall call it what it was called by Isaiah, and what it should be called by us, a day on which we do not our own pleasure, but a delight, honorable, the day holy to the Lord. And how shall we do so? First, let us not spend our Sabbaths as if they were Jewish ones. It is

the Christian Sabbath, not a pharisaic sabbatism. Secondly, let us show that our Sabbaths make us more cheerful, more beneficent, more improved in all that ennobles, dignifies, benefits, and blesses mankind. And next, let us, as preachers — as ministers — try in the Christian congregation to bring forth upon the Sabbaths, in our sermons and expositions, that which will so interest people's minds, and so impress men's hearts, that they will come to the sanctuary, and say, "We rejoiced when it was said unto us, Let us go into the courts of the Lord." Addressing, as one must, an extremely mixed congregation, I do not think that men will long come to hear long theological discussions. You come here weary, wanting to be refreshed; weak, seeking to be made strong; downcast, seeking to be cheered; drooping, seeking to be encouraged; and our great object in preaching the everlasting gospel ought to be so to preach it, that you can say, "I find in these walls food as sweet, and far more delicious and nutritive, than I can find within the pale of the Crystal Palace; and if you find your enjoyment there, I find mine here." You may depend upon it, that however valuable legislation may be, we must make the service attractive, not by gewgaws and Popish decorations, but by speaking to men's hearts, minds, and consciences, and then they will say, "We have here all the attractions of the Crystal Palace, and we have, besides, all that is requisite to make us wiser, holier, happier, and fitter for heaven and everlasting joy."

NOTE. — The Sabbath is an ordinance for man's rest, both actually and typically, as setting forth the rest that remains for God's people. (Heb. iv. 9.) But He who is now speaking has taken on himself manhood, — the whole nature of man, — and is rightful Lord over creation, as granted to man, and of all that is made for man, and therefore of the Sabbath. The whole dispensation of time is created for man, — for Christ, as He is man, — and is in His absolute power. — *Alford.*

CHAPTER III.

INFLUENCE OF THE HEART ON THE HEAD — SABBATH DAY DUTIES —
ANGER — COALITION AGAINST JESUS — THE GREAT PHYSICIAN —
THE TWELVE — EARNESTNESS — BLASPHEMY — THE UNPARDON-
ABLE SIN — THE TRULY BLESSED.

AGAIN, it appears, Jesus violated what were pharisaically held to be the obligations and the sanctities of the Sabbath day. A man came to him with a withered hand, and the scribes and Pharisees, not anxious to know whether he was the Messiah, but far more anxious to ensnare, and, if possible, destroy him, watched him, to see whether he would be guilty of what they in their popular and perverted theology held to be a breach of the Sabbath. How sad it is that the heart very often leads the head, and that what one wishes to be true, the intellect, too subservient, attempts at least to prove, and to the heart satisfactorily succeeds in proving to be true! The scribes and Pharisees must have seen enough to demonstrate the Messiahship of Jesus; but their hearts were so pervaded by malice, and avarice, and ecclesiastical pride, and national glory, that they would not, and therefore they could not yield their homage to Him who came "despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." May our hearts be holy, that thus we may

see clearly. But we read that Jesus, with that calmness and majesty which were the characteristics of a present God, regardless of the prejudices of some, of the passions of others, and of the hostility and cruelty of more, said instantly to the man who had the withered hand, "Stand forth;" and then, in order that they might be convinced by their own judgments, he said, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day? Is this lawful? The law of nature, and the law of Moses, certainly indicate that it is always and everywhere lawful to do good. If a thing be wrong, it is not lawful to do it upon any day; if it be right, it is lawful to do it on the Sabbath day. Is it lawful to save life? or to kill?" If they had said, "It is not lawful," then they would have said that philanthropy, beneficence, and goodness, on the Sabbath were sins. If they had said, "It is lawful," then their own admission would have proved their erroneous notions of the Sabbath day, and would have justified Him. They, therefore, held their peace.

Then Jesus "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." I alluded to this passage in the morning, when we read an almost parallel one in the 11th chapter of the book of Exodus, where we are told that Moses was angry at the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. So here we read that the cause of the anger of Jesus was the hardness of these people's hearts. I argued in the morning that there is no sin in anger. Man was made as truly to be angry, as he was made to laugh, to fear, to sympathize, to feel. The sin con-

sists in its excess, not in its existence. But, in the case of Jesus, that anger was modified by another feeling — grief, at the hardness of their hearts; that is to say, his anger was less with the men, and more with the passions of which they were the unhappy victims. It is always a right state of mind, when we can so love the man, that we are less angry with him, and more grieved at the sin by which he is branded. Jesus so loved the sinner, that he died for him: he so detested the sin, that he shed his blood that it might be cancelled. Anger in the bosom of Jesus was not antipathy to a person, but sorrow at a predominant and unhappy sin.

“The Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians,” an infidel sect, “against him, how they might destroy him.” The Pharisee, who was the great traditionalist of the age, and the Herodian, the great sceptic of the age, coalesced, when the Lord of glory was to be put down. How sad is it that scepticism does not so hate superstition, nor superstition so hate scepticism, as they both hate the simple truth as it is in Christ Jesus! When truth is to be extinguished, the infidel and the Romanist will coalesce and combine together, merging their internal antipathy in a common hatred to that which condemns them both.

We, read then, that Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea of Galilee, and a great multitude followed him. We still find that whilst the scribes and Pharisees, the ecclesiastical rulers of the land, hated him, the common people heard him gladly. Here “a great multitude from Galilee fol-

lowed him, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him." We read, then, that "he healed many; inso-much that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues." The word "plague" does not convey the strict meaning. Πληγὴ means properly, "a blow," or "stroke." The word μύστιξ here employed denotes a scourge. Hence, the plagues in Egypt were literally strokes, or blows, inflicted by God. But the word "plague," in its popular and modern sense, means properly a pestilence or epidemic. The verse here ought to be rendered, "as many as had diseases or afflictions from the hand of God," these Jesus healed; "and unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." To say so was equivalent to saying, "Thou art very God, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person." Now, how could the mere multitude, unacquainted with his divine character, but deeply impressed by the miracles he wrought, have said, "Thou art the Son of God," unless they were divinely taught? These unclean spirits recognized the presence of a loftier than man, and saw, in Jesus, the bruiser of the serpent's head; through whom judgment should be inflicted upon him, and by whom "the old serpent" should be bound in chains for a thousand years, and afterwards cast into Gehenna, and no more suffered to come forth to tempt the nations; and therefore, perfectly orthodox in creed, but malignant in charac-

ter; they said, by constraint, not as an offering of devotion, "Thou art the Son of God." It is a very solemn thought, that all the ends of the earth shall yet acknowledge Jesus in this character, that all the lost in misery, and the saved in glory, shall equally admit that he is Lord of all. The one class shall admit it is a freewill offering joyously given; the other shall express it as a great and awful sacrifice irresistibly exacted. Heaven shall praise him joyfully, and with delight; hell shall praise him reluctantly, but really. From height and depth, from east and west, from north and south, God shall be glorified, either in the joyful songs of the saved, or in the reluctant acknowledgments of those who would not be saved, and who have perished entirely because they rejected him the only Saviour.

We then read, in the 14th verse, that "He ordained twelve." The word "ordained" is not the usual word so translated in the Epistles; it means that he "selected," "elected," or "constituted" twelve, that he might send them forth to preach the Gospel, the great function of the minister of Christ. Why he chose twelve it is difficult to say. Perhaps, if he had taken fewer, it would have been too limited a testimony. By taking twelve he took a competent number who could be witnesses of the facts they saw, and of the truths they heard; and thus go forth as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Or, perhaps, he selected twelve, because that was the number of the tribes of Israel. Their names are given here, "Simon, surnamed Peter; and James the son of

Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot," to whom is attached still the ignominious feature, "which also betrayed him."

We then read, that when "they went into a house, the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it" — that evidently is his relatives according to the flesh — "they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself." He had lived long in obscurity; he had made no pretensions, when under thirty years of age, to teach, or to preach, in all probability; but now he goes forth preaching and teaching, and doing many wonderful works; and therefore, they said, "He is beside himself." But are these not the types of the world still? Let a man show as much zeal in the service of God, as one shows in the service of an earthly master, and thousands will say, "Much religion has made him mad." Let a man show that he is in earnest about his soul, that he is in earnest in teaching others the way to heaven, that he is in earnest in spreading that blessed Gospel, that is the savor of life unto life in all that believe it, and his friends will propose that he be restrained; they will say he is beside himself. How strange it is, that the world will bear with the most exalted enthusiasm in a patriot, with the most devoted enthusiasm in a statesman, with great enthusiasm in a philanthropist; but the moment that

the enthusiasm which is so beautiful and so appreciated in the things of time is transferred to a subject worthy of its noblest fervor, then the world says that much religion has made you mad. But surely, if a barrister speaks with enthusiasm for his client, if a physician studies enthusiastically the disease of his patient, if a statesman pleads enthusiastically in the House of Commons, how much more should a Christian minister, a Christian teacher, a district visitor, a Sabbath school teacher, speak, and plead, and act enthusiastically on behalf of Christ Jesus!

We then read, that the scribes who came from Jerusalem, not so charitable as his friends, did not ascribe his conduct to enthusiasm or excess of feeling, but they ascribed it wickedly to the inspiration of Satan; and asserted that the Son of God cast out devils — not denying the supernatural and miraculous facts, but ascribing the energy by which they were done to Beelzebub, that is, a name given by them to Satan, the prince of the devils. This was a very awful and most flagrantly wicked charge, and so utterly inapplicable to the Son of God, that it is spoken of as one of those sins that are in danger of eternal damnation. But Jesus, not in the least angry, as he was with the hardness of their hearts, but rather pitying the misguided men who had made the charge, reasons with them quietly and calmly as rational men; thus teaching us, that however extravagant the charge may be that is made against us, yet, if we speak calmly and sensibly, there is something in human nature that will lead it to listen the moment we do so. Some one has said, "Speak

common sense to a mob, and the mob will be quiet." Speak what is rational to those who are infuriated against you, and they will listen for a little to what you have got to say. On this occasion Jesus spoke to these scribes and Pharisees with intense common sense. "How is it possible? How can Satan cast out Satan? Would he commit suicide? Would he rise up against himself? Has such a phenomenon any counterpart in your experience? You know that if a house be divided against itself—if one half rise up against the other half of the family—the house will very soon be destroyed. If Satan were to cast out Satan, he would commit suicide. Therefore, how can you suppose that he will help me to depress and put down that very kingdom which is the strength, the glory, and the stronghold of Satan himself?" And then, rising from reasoning with them, from the lowliness of an arguer to the dignity and sacredness of a judge, he says, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Very many excellent Christians have been perplexed by the fear that they may have committed what is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. Well, as far as this passage gives us information concerning it, it is obvious that the sin against the Holy Ghost could have been committed only in the days of our Saviour's pilgrimage upon earth; and, that the development in which it showed

itself was ascribing his miracles to the inspiration of the devil, instead of the inspiration of God. The only other form in which the sin can possibly exist now is, in final resistance to the offers of the Gospel. There is no human being for whom there is not instant pardon the instant that he turns to God, and seeks forgiveness in the name of Jesus. There is no man upon earth, whilst he lives and is within the reach of the Gospel, who can be said to have committed an unpardonable sin, and for whom there is not instant, complete, and everlasting forgiveness in Jesus. Be you sure that you are resting on the Saviour's sacrifice, that you trust in the Saviour's righteousness, and that you are living as members, disciples, and followers of the Lamb; and you need not be afraid that you have committed an unpardonable sin, of that which is here called the sin against the Holy Ghost.

We have, at the close of the chapter, a very interesting incident. "The multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." That was the Virgin Mary, and some of the relatives of Jesus, who were standing without, seeking him. These he answered in very striking language, which showed that the place Mary once had in reference to him had now ceased. The moment that he entered on his ministry his language to Mary was deferential, but faithful: "Mary," or "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" This was when she thrust in her own officious services; and when others pleaded the claims of Mary, as much as to say, "You must not

be so engaged with the outer works of the world, as to forget your mother and your brethren." Jesus said, "Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Jesus here teaches us that every true Christian is, in reference to Christ, just as blessed as was the Virgin Mary. She was blessed in being the mother of our Lord according to the flesh, and truly did she sing, "All generations shall call me blessed;" but more blessed, I believe, are they who hear the word of God, and do it. They who hear God's word, and do his will, and walk in his ways, are elevated to a dignity which is not possessed by Mary and his brethren according to the flesh: for "the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

NOTE.—The unclean spirits are here spoken of in the person of those possessed by them, and the two fused together; for as it was impossible that any but the spirits could have known that He was the Son of God, so it was the material body of the possessed which fell down before Him, and their voice which uttered the cry. See note on Matt. viii. 32. The notion of the semi-rationalists, that the sick identified with the demons (Meyer), is at once refuted by the universal agreement of the testimony given on such occasions, that Jesus was the Son of God.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER IV.

POPULARITY OF TEACHING OF JESUS — PARABLE — FABLE — ALLEGORY — DIFFERENT WORDS FOR SAME TRUTHS — THE SOWER — DIFFERENCE IN MATTHEW AND MARK — THE MUSTARD-TREE — JESUS IN A STORM.

WE see here another proof of the great popularity of the teaching of our blessed Lord; for it is said, that when “he began to teach by the seaside,” as the only tessellated floor, and on a rock, probably, as the only pulpit, “there was gathered unto him a great multitude;” that is, the common people, who are said to have heard him gladly; and “he entered into a ship,” in order that he might be disentangled from the maze of an over crowding people; “and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.” And then, it is said, “he taught them many things by parables.” What is a parable? A fable is an imaginary thing, improbable in its foundation, but probable enough in its structure, and designed to teach a great truth. The fables of Phædrus, of Æsop, and others, all suppose things that we know never occur — birds and beasts speaking and deciding. The fable, therefore, is more of a human and a worldly vehicle, of great practical good sense. But the parable is historically most probable, though literally not true, and made, because historically

probable, the vehicle of some precious, spiritual, and instructive truth. The allegory is a thing totally distinct from both. For instance, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is an allegory; that is, certain virtues and vices, and abstract moral things, are personated, or represented as incarnate, and regarded as speaking to each other, and thereby inculcating in the reader great moral and instructive truths. We have from the lips of Jesus, not allegories, except in the slightest degree, not fables at all, but frequently those beautiful parables that are the pedestals of grand truths, and which, the more they are pondered by us, seem more and more to indicate the wisdom of Him who taught them, and to unfold their applicability to man in every age, country, and century in the world's history.

The parable of the sower, which we had in Matthew, is here repeated with some variety. One does not know well how to settle the slight differences, and at the same time admit the substantial concord between the conversations of Jesus, as recorded by different evangelists. It seems that he spoke probably in Syriac, the language of the country, and that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, gave as their memories recollected, guided and taught by the Holy Spirit, not always the *ipsissima verba*, the very words, but always and everywhere the great and substantial truths which He taught. You know that the same truth may be clothed in different language, and the illustrations of it may be varied, and yet its consistency with itself, and with another narrative given of it, may remain unim-

peached and unimpaired throughout. The Spirit inspired equally the several expressions of the same truth.

This version of the parable slightly differs, in some of the details, from Matthew's; but those deviations teach us that the evangelists did not copy from each other. We know, that if four persons witness a transaction, each will be struck most forcibly by a different part of it, and in giving a narration of it, each will unfold most fully that part of it which most impressed itself upon his mind. And you will find also that people's education, business, station in life, and habits of thought, will all very much give tone, shape, peculiarity, and distinctness, to their respective narratives of any particular event. Matthew was a publican, Luke was a learned physician, John was an illiterate Hebrew, and Mark is supposed to have been a more learned man. Each, therefore, gives a varied verbal narrative of the same great transaction; but all were guided and inspired by the overruling Spirit to record, in all their fulness, the wonderful words of Him who spake as never man spake.

In this parable we are told that a sower — in this case the Lord of glory — went out to sow. He has under seedsmen, but He himself is the great primary Sower. He sows in his providence, by his grace, from his Word, and in the preaching of the Gospel. And it came to pass, apparently, as the world would say, accidentally, but as the necessary and natural result, that "as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up."

The German Rationalists, who consist of a class of men who read the Bible as Zoilus of old read Homer, not to be benefited by its lessons, but to find out flaws in it, — and when a person sets to work to find faults where there are none, his oblique eye will make them for itself, — have said, that no sower upon earth would have been so foolish as to sow seeds by the way-side, or amongst thorns, and that therefore we cannot suppose this to be a just parable. My answer is, that the parable is that of a sower, not of an economist, — the idea of economy has nothing to do with it — that idea is illustrated with great truth in other parts of the sacred volume. The parable here is that of a sower, who flings the seed upon an earth that once was made to bear it, but that now, not by the sower's fault, but by the people's sin, has barren as well as prolific parts; and going forth in his capacity purely as a sower — in no respect as an economist — going forth to sow without thinking of the different soils in which he was to sow — the result was, that some of the seed fell by the way-side, and of course, the way-side being hard, the seed lay upon the surface, and the fowls ate it. “And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth;” and the consequence was, that a great deal of moisture, and a very little soil, gave a rapid and precocious growth, which was destructive to its ultimate usefulness. “And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it;” for in this fallen world weeds grow faster than wheat, and wicked things prosper more, unfortunately we may say, than holy, pure, and just things; and the result

was, that the nettles, thorns, and thistles, overshadowed and choked the good seed. But "other fell on good ground," and yielded much fruit.

Then we have the explanation of it by our blessed Lord; but he says that he gave it not then to all. It seems strange to you that he should say, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables." But the word "mystery," as used in the Bible, does not mean an incomprehensible truth, but something that was once hid, and now is made known. For instance, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh." To the ancient Jew it was a dark and impenetrable mystery, but to us it is now clearly and plainly revealed. Again, it is called a mystery that the Gentiles should be admitted into brotherhood with the Jews. That was to the Jew an unimaginable thing — he could not conceive it possible — but now, we are told, it is manifest, and Gentile and Jew are in fellowship, and this mystery is therefore revealed. Now, says our Lord, these parables are mysteries; these truths that I am now teaching you were once unintelligible to you as to the multitude without; but they are now intelligible to you, the inner circle I am at present instructing, whilst they are unintelligible to the outer circle, or the scribes and Pharisees, and the multitudes about them. You say, Why should this be? I answer, that on the supposition that the facts of the life of Jesus were to be what they actually have been, it was necessary that some of the greatest truths that he taught

should be temporarily sealed to the rulers of the earth, else they would have precipitated to a crisis, that which it needed otherwise years to mature. Christ did not reveal to all who heard him the truths of his kingdom; but when Pentecost came they were fully made known. If He was to be spared, except by a special manifestation of Omnipotence, in Judea for three years, teaching and preparing his apostles to preach and suffer, it was necessary that all should not know what he taught, but that to a chosen band the great doctrines of his gospel should be clearly indicated, and to the rest whenever those doctrines should be committed to paper, or placed in a permanent shape for all. And this quotation from Isaiah, "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; that hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them;" does not mean that it is done in order to harden men, but that this will be the result of it. And here we notice a distinction between Matthew and Mark, showing that the former wrote for the Jews, and the latter for the Gentiles. Matthew always, in quoting a prophecy, says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet;" but Mark, except in the very beginning of his Gospel, frequently merely gives the result that took place, without alluding to it as the fulfilment of a prophecy.

Our Lord then explains the beautiful parable. It needs no explanation to us. It was a mystery to the Pharisee, but it is now no mystery to the humblest and most illiterate Christian. First, we have

in every congregation a class who may be called way-side hearers. Their hearts are so hard, that truths scattered upon them rebound. We have next a class that may be called the stony-ground hearers. They are delighted with the sermon they have heard; they think it very beautiful, very eloquent, very instructive; they are charmed with it, and determine to come and hear that preacher again; but the seed has no real hold of the soil of the heart; the impression made wastes away, or is worn down by the thought of this present world, and they come again no more. The third class are they who hear the Word, rejoice in it, and take a step further; but they are so overwhelmed with the cares, thoughts, and anxieties of this present world, and they are so misled and deceived by the treacherous sophisms called "the deceitfulness of riches," and the love of other things — ambition, vainglory, power — and these things occupy so large a space in their hearts, that there is no time left for the seed to ripen and mature itself unto the harvest. And then, lastly, there are the good-ground hearers, — good, not by nature, for if there be any difference between the soils, the difference is not the creature's doing, but the Regenerator's grace. And then, the good soil first hears the Word. It is necessary to hear; and how shall they hear without a preacher? But secondly, they receive it, that is, hold it fast, cordially embrace it. And thirdly, they bring forth much fruit — different degrees of it — but in every case fruit. Thus we have four classes, — the second better than the first, the third better than the second,

but the last the best of all — the soil that we should pray for, the blessing that we should covet.

Our Lord then gives them another parable, which is drawn very much from the same figure; and also he illustrates “the kingdom of God,” that is, the dispensation of the gospel, by a grain of mustard-seed, which, I believe, in Eastern countries, though in itself a small seed, grows to a greater size than other herbs of the same species or genus, and becomes a shelter for the birds of the air. In the parable of the sower, you have the inner development of the gospel; in the parable of the mustard-seed, you have its outer development and expansion; in the one life; in the other, the forming of a shelter and a shadow for all that seek to it. And then he explained all things to the disciples when he found them alone.

We then read at the close of the chapter of his going into a ship, and being weary, for he was the Man of sorrows. It is said, that he slept on a pillow at the hinder part of the ship, and a great storm arose. Down the mountain gorges around the Sea of Galilee, as you know is the case with our English lakes, or Scottish lochs, an unexpected gale will come, and cause a storm, in which the small boat on the lake or loch is liable to be lost. Well, an unexpected storm came, and Jesus was asleep. Jonah once slept in a ship, but that was the opiate of crime; Jesus slept in the ship, but that was the calm of perfect and unbroken innocence. And the disciples came to him alarmed, distrustful, fearing, and they said, “Master, carest thou not

that we perish?" If they had said, "Lord, lull the wind," that would not have been such a breach of the evidence of faith; but the expression was, "Lord, we fear that thou art not what we thought, for it seems as if thou caredst not that we perish."

Then Jesus arose; and what majesty is here! He rebuked the wind and sea. Creation's Sealord, and creation's Landlord, was there; and the winds and waves recognized the voice that said, "Let them be;" and they that became being at his bidding, now became calm when he so willed it. And this He did, not as a mere fact, but as an earnest of that day when nature shall be restored to her pristine peace, order, and harmony; when the groans and travails of creation shall cease, and that which is nature's normal condition—a condition of quiet and calm—shall be nature's enjoyment again; and we shall not only recognize Him as One who rebukes the winds and waves, and both obeying him, but we shall recognize Him who has made and remade the sea and the dry land, and restored all nature by a regensis more glorious than its first genesis, to that order, beauty, and harmony which it lost by sin. I believe that this earth is not to be given up to Satan. It is a deranged world; it is grievously disturbed; there is fever in its organization, because sin has smitten it; but the great Lord who made it will come to it again, and he will expunge from it all its ills, its poison, and its fever, and make this orb, which has so many magnificent traces of its primeval grandeur, one of the brightest and most beautiful in the whole celestial firmament, reflecting, not only as

other orbs do, the God who made it, but the Christ that also redeemed it.

Of these outer acts they that saw said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" We may exclaim of an inner work, "What manner of man is this, that the winds of human prejudice and the waves of human passion obey him?"

CHAPTER IV. 26-29.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD — THE SOWER — THE SEED — THE GROWTH
— THE HARVEST.

LET me explain what appears to be conveyed by the phrase, "the kingdom of God," as applied in this and other passages to the dispensation of the Gospel.

It is evidently used by our Lord to designate the outward and visible church; that is, the church composed of tares and of wheat, of good seed that ripens and seed that is decayed, of good fishes and of bad. It is the company of the baptized, the visible church, as it is called, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In all ages it has been a mingled body; there is no such fact upon earth as a pure, perfect, and holy church. There are saints of God in the worst; there are sinners and wicked ones in the best; and every attempt that has been made — such is the instructive lesson of history — to create a new church, on the supposition that it would be a pure one, has issued only in the creation of another and frequently a worse.

The truth is, that zealous men that separate from a partially corrupt church, in the hope that they will

be able to constitute a pure one, have found that they have simply changed their place from an acre that brought forth tares and wheat, to another that brought forth tares and wheat still. The way to get the whole church of Christ made purer, the way to raise the temperature of the whole body, is for each individual to get his own heart under the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God; and thus, and by this process only, will the church of Christ be made purer.

Do not expect on earth a pure visible church till the Lord come. I do not think that it is God's ordination that there should be in this dispensation a pure one. The tares and the wheat remain mingled together even to the end; and when some good but indiscreet men asked leave to root up the tares, what do we find was the answer of our blessed Lord? — "Do not do so, lest you root up the wheat also." Better that twenty tares should grow in the field ecclesiastical, than that one precious wheat stalk should be injured by their removal. What we need is not change of place, but change of individual character. The old machinery is good enough if we can only get good men to use it. We do not want to break up the machinery that we happen in God's providence to be associated with, but to improve and elevate it by improving, elevating, and sanctifying, by the grace of God, our own individual hearts.

If we more and more prayed that the Holy Spirit of God would change the hearts of them that are in the church, whatever section of the church it may

be; and became less and less menders of churches, or church tinkers; I am quite sure we should more substantially and rapidly contribute to that blessed and glorious result, when the church will attain its highest possible purity on earth prior to the advent of Him whose prerogative alone it is to separate the tares from the wheat, and take the wheat into his own barns.

But whilst the phrase, "the kingdom of God," is thus applied to the visible church, it is also defined by certain moral characteristics; it is not only a company of subjects baptized, but it is also a power or an influence in the individual heart. The apostle defines it when he says, "The kingdom of God is not meat nor drink," that is, it is not a question of ecclesiastical, or sectarian, or sacramental, or any other ceremony; but it is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." While, therefore, the company of the baptized is a mixed body, the kingdom of God, as an influence on the individual heart, is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit moulding every thought, affection, and feeling to the likeness of Christ, till the individual believer, upon earth, reflects upon the world the image and perfection of Him who translated him from darkness into his own marvellous light.

Now, in this parable we have a view, I think, of the progress in individual hearts, such as is not given in the parable of the sower that immediately precedes it.

In studying this parable, let us notice that the soil in which the seed is cast is the human heart.

In some cases the soil, or that heart, is so hard that when the sower drops a handful of seeds upon it the seeds rebound and are scattered in the air, or they remain upon the hard surface of the heart—hardened by the traffic of Mammon and the feet of this world's cares—and remain till picked up by the birds of heaven; and so the seed does not germinate nor grow up into a golden harvest.

But this is not the only phase of the human heart; it is not only hardened, and so passively rejects the seed, but it puts forth also active resistance to it. The human heart is not a dead material, but an active and vital power; and as such it is defined by an apostle himself to be "enmity to God." It is a very awful thing that the heart should hate whatsoever things are pure, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report. If your heart and my heart do not hate all that is holy, you have not Adam the First to thank, but Adam the Second, who has made you to differ.

But not only is the heart thus actively opposed to the entry in of what is good, but it has a worse peculiarity—it is actively receptive of what is positively evil. Let the good seeds be sown in the natural heart, and it not only is hardened that it will not receive them, but it wilfully repels them; and on the other hand, let the seed consist of that of weeds or tares, and it enthusiastically receives them. Your heart and my heart give by nature hospitality to evil; a cold and freezing admission to the good. Not only have we enmity within us to what is good, but we are so debased and

fallen by nature that we welcome what is evil as that which is congenial to ourselves and dearest to the passions and prejudices of our hearts.

Having looked, then, at the soil, let me observe next the sower. The sower, in the first parable, is the Lord himself. The sower, it would seem, in this parable is the under seedsman, or sower sent forth by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In looking at the minister of the Gospel as the sower of the good seed, I single out him, not as if he alone sowed; for there is not a conversation that you hold in a railway carriage, nor a word that you utter in the streets, nor a criticism that you pass upon a friend, that is not a seed of some sort; and a seed that will germinate somewhere and meet you again at the great harvest, when the angels are the reapers and the tares are burned.

All persons are, therefore, sowers; but primarily and chiefly and officially, the ministers of the Gospel.

Now, notice what they are to sow. It is seed, and that seed the minister does not create, he only collects.

The sower that would sow what he himself had formed by his own mechanical or chemical ingenuity, would find very little result in the harvest; but the sower sent forth by the great Master of all gathers from the granary of Scripture the seeds that are laid there, and spreads them over all souls, seeking for a blessing upon the work of his hands, and hoping by the grace of God for a bounteous harvest-home; which will be more than a recompense for all

his toils. The minister must sow seeds; the seeds of the word.

If a farmer were to sow his field with the most precious pearls from the depths of the sea, or with the most beautiful gems from the East or from the West, they would sparkle in setting and in rising suns, but they would never grow into a harvest that would feed mankind; and if the minister of the Gospel should speak to you in figures so beautiful that you will be charmed, or in strains of rhetoric so impressive that you shall go away like Ezekiel's hearers, having listened to him as to one who plays beautifully upon an instrument, yet no good will be done. Figures of speech, elegant metaphors, pretty conceits, preached from the pulpit, are just as objectionable as chaff sown by the farmer in spring, with the foolish hope that it will grow up into a great and blessed harvest.

If the minister sow his sparkling figures over all the souls subjected to his influence, the result will be, that thousands will admire, but none will be profited; on the contrary, many will pine and perish for want of bread.

Again, when the minister receives the seed, it must not only be true seed, but it must be sown. We have no evidence that the seed sows itself. There are certainly some seeds—the seeds, I believe, of some kinds of thistles—that have got small wings of down, and are wafted by the winds, and thus sown, if I may so call it, by themselves; but the law of most seeds is that they must be taken from the granary, scattered by the industrious hand, and

committed to the prolific soil, in order to grow up into a harvest. Left in the granary the seed will decay; but cast into the congenial soil it will bear much fruit. The minister, therefore, must sow it.

The Gospel, in like manner, must be preached. The winds do not chant it: the stars do not write it: the waves of the sea do not chime it. God has appointed men to preach, in order that the people may hear; he has sent forth seedsmen to sow, in order that the seed may bring forth fruit; in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some one hundred-fold. The ministry is thus not a sinecure, but a work: they are laborers with Christ, fellow-workmen with him; they have seeds to sow, and of all laborers they ought to be the most diligent; because upon their toils depend results that are measured only by immensity, and limited only by eternity.

When the farmer sows, there are some seasons that are more suitable for sowing than others; we all know that the seed sown at one month in the year will grow up only a stunted or worthless product; whereas, sown at the time indicated by its nature, in the providence of God, it will grow up a mature and ripe fruit. There are seasons in every man's individual life, seasons in national life, seasons in the world's life, when the seed dropped is like a word spoken in season; behold, how good and precious it is! Miss the season that is best for sowing, and it is like the husbandman having lost the spring, like the sailor having missed the tide, like an apprentice having played when he should have toiled, like a soldier having studied politics instead of the articles of war.

What are some of these seasons?

One season is, that of severe and sorrowful bereavement. It is always found that the human heart is most receptive of the seeds of everlasting truth, when it has been saturated by sorrow, and softened by its influence, as if by the dews of heaven. And when the good seed—the word of everlasting truth—can be cast into the heart over which the wave of affliction has swept, that heart, like the earth left by the receding waters of the Nile, receives the good seed and becomes prolific of blessed and of more than rewarding harvests.

Another season, too, when the seed may be sown with the greatest hope, is the season of youth. In youth the heart is most soft, most susceptible; the seed cast into it strikes deepest, remains longest, and grows most luxuriantly to the harvest. Let me, therefore, say to the young, “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Let me ask the young to place themselves, whenever they have the opportunity, under the influence of divine truth. The lessons you have received in youth will grow up your comfort and your joy in the wintry days of old age, and be to you the seeds of a harvest glorious as that described by our blessed Lord, when the tares are cast out from the field, and the ripened wheat is gathered by himself into his own great barns.

I do not say that, if these seasons are lost, there will never be another opportunity equally good; but I do say that these seasons are so precious, that you cannot too earnestly or too prayerfully avail your-

selves of them. Wherever there is a heart that beats, I must however add, there is a soil in which the seed may be cast; and as long as there is life, so long there may be prayer, and so long there is hope.

Let me notice again, that when the sower has cast the seed into the soil, in the beautiful language of the parable I have selected as my text, he can do nothing more. All that he does is to rise in the morning, and retire to rest at night;—"he may sleep and rise night and day, but the seed springeth up he knoweth not how." In other words, the husbandman casts his seed into the soil in spring: he may watch it out of curiosity, or because he has an interest in it; but he is not the cause of the sunshine and of the fertilizing dew; he cannot command the clouds to pour down their treasures; he cannot give to the earth the fertility it has not. It is in this case, as in the higher and the holier one,—“the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

We see from this, too, that we must expect, in sowing the seed, the celestial blessing, in order that our terrestrial toils may be crowned with success. In vain does the husbandman sow if there be no sunshine and no rains, and in vain are there sunshine and rains if the husbandman does not sow. God has so knit together the terrestrial toil, or use of means, and the celestial blessing that makes those means efficacious, that it is ours patiently to use

the means, that is, to sow the seeds, and prayerfully to look for mist and clouds and sunshine to Him that commands a blessing and makes the reaper to tread upon the skirts of the sower.

And again, although the sower does not give virtue to the seed, or fertility to the soil, yet he is nevertheless not an unconcerned spectator. The language of the passage is, that he "rises up and watches," that is, that he feels a deep interest in it; and that minister of the Gospel who can scatter over those living pulsating hearts that are around him those great truths that will either be their ruin or their restoration, and feels no anxiety that the effect should be the best and noblest and the most blessed, has no sympathy with the great Master. But whilst we may sympathize with the progress of the work, whilst we may feel anxious that every section of the field should prosper, we can make no contribution to it, we are helpless in the higher processes: we can only wait and watch and pray that the Lord of the harvest will command a blessing that will make the seed grow up and bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred-fold.

It has been carefully calculated, that of all the seed that is sown on the earth, two fifths are used, partly to feed the worms of the earth, partly to feed the birds of the air, and some parts of it decay and fail to germinate at all. But so beautifully has God arranged it, that if man were to say — "Since two fifths of the seed that I scatter in my field are dissipated, I will in future only sow the remaining three fifths," the result of the harvest would be that he

would not starve the dumb creation, but very soon be starved himself. It is God's great law that man shall be the almoner of the creation, as it was God's great law at first that man should be the priest of all living happy things. And we find the same truth in the ministry of the Gospel. The minister preaches truths that are fitted to electrify the world; he scatters seed that may benefit the nations; and the result is only that one here and one there is the good soil that receives the seed and brings forth fruit accordingly. But is the rest of the seed lost? No; alas! it proves to some the savor of death: it is going forth in its message of greatness, or of goodness, to others; and though he cannot trace the effects of all that he says, if he speak God's truth in God's name, and with God's Holy Spirit, it is as certain as that suns shall set and rise, that never a word shall return to God void.

And again, we are often prone to estimate the effects of preaching by instantaneous or non-instantaneous results. I believe we ought not to do so. It is not the law in nature that the reaper follows the sower, and that the autumn bursts upon the spring. We find the interval of the ripening summer between the seed that is sown and the fruits that are gathered. And if this be so in God's natural world, we may depend upon it there is some analogy between this and God's spiritual world. I am not strongly disposed to believe in instantaneous conversions. What are called so are really the results of long hidden processes. The seed germinates, and we think it is instantaneous, whilst it is really a

harvest very remote from the spring in which the seed was sown. We are therefore not to suppose that no good is done by a sermon, because its echo does not come from every pew. The seed may lie hidden, may be choked, may be buried, but it has life, and it will spring up one day, and bear fruit abundantly.

In the next place, we see in this very beautiful and suggestive parable the idea of progress. "He should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is not instantaneous result, but gradual and progressive development. It is not like the mountain torrents, that are very soon swollen, and very soon dry up; but it is a gradual expansion, the seeds of spring issue in the golden ears of autumn.

There is, first of all, says our Lord, the blade. And this reminds me of a very important truth. The blade is at first extremely small. You will see it sometimes in March peeping up amid the cold and freezing snow, and so much like a weed, that if you are not an experienced farmer, you would denounce it at once as such. And yet the hopes of a nation's bread all rest upon the maturing and ripening of that green leaf that grows out from the snow, and seems itself so little to promise the harvests that are to follow. Now, my dear friends, how suggestive to us is that beautiful analogy of that charity which beareth all things, and hopeth all

things. The man who has just been brought to feel an interest in the Gospel, may be so little advanced, that he looks more like a weed than wheat, that he seems more of the world than out of it, that it seems as if his Christianity were so weak and fragile, that the first influence of frost, or the first touch of the cold March north-east wind, would blight and blast it for ever. But, my dear friends, be careful: do not condemn as a weed him or her who may be a blade of true wheat, scarcely distinguishable by you, but watched and tended by Him who hears the cry of the wild raven, clothes the lily of the field, and brings the blade of March into the full ears of August and September. Do not, brethren, set down as a worldly one who may just be emerging from the snow in a cold and uncongenial climate, and needing, not the north-east wind of a cold rebuke of yours, but the warm atmosphere of affectionate nurture. Take care, lest in your attempt to discriminate you injure the planting of the Lord. The blade, however feeble, however unpromising to you, is wheat; and if watched, tended, and cared for, it will overcome all the obstructions that resist it, and unfold itself into a harvest that will make the heart of the widow to sing for joy, and the world to be blessed by its presence. There is indicated in this passage progress. The blade, however weak, grows into wheat. In other words, if you are a true Christian, I do not believe that you ever can be transformed into the reverse. I do not believe, because the Bible does not seem to me to teach it, that the Christian of to-day may become the unconverted

sceptic of to-morrow. The loudest professor of to-day may be the loudest blasphemer to-morrow; but wheat cannot be changed into tares. The living seed from the granary of God is from Him, and it grows to Him. If a man be born, he is a man; if he be born again, he is a Christian; and if he be the shining light, (to vary the figure employed in this passage,) it will shine more and more unto the perfect day. The blade will reach the ear, and the ear the full corn in the ear.

We have again here the harvest that follows alluded to. That harvest is sometimes reaped partly on earth, but it is sure to be reaped in all its fulness at the close of this present dispensation. And how beautiful is harvest! It is only exceeded by spring. It is then that nature sits on her golden sheaves, like a mother amidst her rejoicing offspring, and all nature seems to lift up its glad anthem of praise unto Him who is the Lord of the spring and the Lord of the harvest. But all the harvests of the earth, when ripest, will be nothing in grandeur and magnificence to that last harvest, where angels are the reapers, and Jesus watches over all. But sometimes we see the harvest even in this world. In this dispensation you come to a death-bed — a Christian departs, like a sheaf ripe and fit for transference into the kingdom of heaven. You sometimes see a harvest as a foretaste of the ultimate one, in a congregation, when after long lying fallow, scorched and parched by the sun, it comes under a new birth, and basks in a bright sunshine, and its very solitary places blossom as the rose. And sometimes it

appears in a nation. Do you think that the living seeds that Latimer, Ridley, Knox, and Luther sowed, ever can be extinguished? They are beneath the green grass; they may be deeply buried beneath the everlasting hills; but the time comes when the breath of spring shall come over them, and the seeds that were watered by the tears of weeping eyes, and softened by the blood of warm hearts, shall feel the breath and influence of Him whose they are and from whom they come, and a great nation shall burst in a glorious harvest, till the language of the 65th Psalm becomes literal, — “The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.”

But the great and the ultimate harvest is at the end, not of the world, as we call it, for I do not believe that the world will have any, but at the end of the age, the present dispensation. Let us never forget, in looking at the whole of this parable, that the sower is not always the reaper. In the language of Scripture, “one soweth, and another reapeth.” I have often taken comfort from this. One preaches faithfully from year to year the everlasting Gospel. You do not see (for that is all one can say) that practical response to it which you have been led to expect, or that you have earnestly prayed for. It may be so. Then what is your conclusion? That God has placed you simply as a sower; another comes in your place when your work is done, and sees whole harvests spring up in all their mellowness and ripeness, and God has given him the position of a reaper. The sower’s duties may be as laborious,

though his dignities are not as great. Because one sows he is not to despair, and the reaper is not to boast; but both are to wait for that blessed day when they shall meet, and sower and reaper shall rejoice together.

Let us, again, recollect that we know certainly that the present is our seed-time. I think one of the most awful experiences expressed in God's holy Word is this, — "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." This is our seed-time. Are our hearts receiving trustfully the living seed? Do we open our ears to the truth? Is the sanctuary becoming dearer to us? Is the preaching of the Gospel more appreciated by us? Can we say that a day in God's courts is better than a thousand that we spend elsewhere? Do we rejoice when it is said to us, "Let us go up into the house of the Lord?" We are under influences that are hardening us for ruin, or ripening us for glory: which are ye? I speak as unto reasonable men: judge ye what I say.

Let us, again, never forget that there are two vitalities upon earth. Evil has life: good has life. The seeds of evil grow up into tares: the seeds of the good grow up into wheat. A sinful word spoken at random may prove in some innocent heart a seed that grows up into a tare; and the awful truth of the parable is, not that the tare is something separate from the man, but that the tare and the man are inseparably one.

NOTE. — [26-29.] Peculiar to Mark. By commentators of the Straussian school, it is supposed to be the same as the parable of the tares, with the tares left out. (!!) If so, a wonderful and most instructive parable has arisen out of the fragments of the other, in which the idea is a totally different one. It is the growth of the once deposited seed by the combination of its own development with the genial power of the earth; all, of course, under the creative hand of God, but independent of human care and anxiety during this time of growth.

[28.] No trouble of ours can accelerate the growth or shorten the stages which each seed must pass through. It is the mistake of modern Methodism, for instance, to be always working at the seed, — taking it up to see whether it is growing, instead of leaving it to God's own good time, and meanwhile diligently doing God's work elsewhere. See Stier, vol. iii. p. 16. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER V.

DEMONIAC POSSESSION — SATAN IN THE HERD OF SWINE — THE CONDUCT OF THE DELIVERED DEMONIAC — SHOWING FORTH THE TRUTH — THE WOMAN TOUCHING THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT — THE RULER AND HIS DAUGHTER.

EVERY touch of the pen of the sacred historian is evidence here of the presence of Him whom in the previous chapter the winds and the sea obeyed, and whom in this chapter all the diseases of fallen humanity, the worst and most inveterate, recognized as the great, the only, and the infallible Physician. The first sketch or *tableau* is exceedingly impressive and awfully striking, giving on the one side a picture of the depth to which poor humanity may be dragged, and presenting on the obverse a picture of the power, mercy, and sovereignty of Him whom all things in heaven and earth and under the earth obey.

I have often had occasion to remark upon the fact that demoniac possessions seem now altogether to have ceased — that, at least, we have no evidence upon which we can depend of any thing anywhere approaching to actual demoniac possession having recently occurred or at present existing upon earth. It may be, that just before Jesus came Satan had outstepped his boundaries, and had intruded beyond

his former province, and lodged himself in the very recesses of the human soul; so that if Jesus had not come at the time when he actually came, all humanity would have been made the prisonhouse, the thrall, the bondslave of Satan himself. After our Lord's ascension, no such instances occur, and this relief may have occurred at the time when he said, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning." God manifest in the flesh seems to have put an end to that peculiar type of Satan's power called demoniac possessions. Satan still touches the human soul at every point; he still intrudes into the sanctuary of the heart. Satan stole into Paradise, and he still finds unbidden access to the regenerate heart: only of such a heart it is true, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but" — blessed preparation and only defence — the Saviour says, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There is something very remarkable in this man possessed with the devil. It seems as if there were two antagonistic wills — there is the will of the man when he runs to and worships Jesus; and there appears again the dominant and more powerful will of the devil that possessed him, when he spoke through the organs of the man, and said, "My name is Legion; for we are many." There is something, too, very awful in the idea that the devil within the man adjures Jesus not to come and torment him before his time. What a chapter does this reveal! Satan finds his happiness in tormenting souls, and his own torment is his expulsion from the dominion of the human soul. What an awful thought is it that

there should be a being in God's universe whose happiness consists in being and doing evil, whose enjoyment is proportionate to his success in destroying, who was a murderer from the beginning, who is beyond all hope of restoration, recovery, or regeneration, — a doomed, lost, and ruined spirit for ever!

The demoniac was asked by Jesus, "What is thy name?" but he was silent; and the evil spirit spake for him, and thinking to frighten Jesus, whom he recognized, nevertheless, as the Lord of heaven, said in accents of thunder, "My name is Legion: for we are many," — as if he would imply that they were more than a match for Jesus; that they were not one solitary spirit, whom he might cast out as he had done in other cases, but a multitude whom to resist would be peril, and whom to overcome would be wholly impossible. Then the evil spirit prayed that they might be sent, if sent out at all, — as if feeling that their presence where Christ wished it not to be was not possible — into a herd of swine that were feeding on the hills, to the number of two thousand, close by. The strange thing is that they should make such a petition. No less strange is it that brutes should be so inhabited. But the brute creation, we know, is under the domination of evil already. There is evidence in our own experience that dumb brutes around us are receptive of human influence; and there is evidence in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that all creation, the dumb brutes as well as the material creation, groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting to be delivered. There is nothing more strange in

the swine being taken possession of by the devil — nay, I think much less so — than in human beings being taken possession of; for Satan has not only a foothold in the heart of man, but in the whole of creation, during this present economy.

But it may be said, Does it not seem strange that Jesus should permit the demons to go into the swine? and that the swine should be taken away and destroyed, and thus be the loss of very great property to their owners? I answer, these very swine belonged to Jews, who were forbidden by their law, to keep them, but who procured Gentiles to tend them for them, and who thought that they, the masters, were excused for their crime because their servants immediately committed it: and thus, when the demons went into the swine, it was a just retribution upon the proprietors for doing that which they knew in their own hearts and consciences was forbidden by their own law.

When the whole herd went into the sea, and perished in the waters, the Gadarenes “began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” What an awful thing is this! They preferred their swine to the presence of the Son of God. And yet, has not that strange and revolting fact its shadow, projected forward into every age? The Jews preferred Barabbas to Jesus; the Gadarenes preferred their swine to his presence; and are there not many in every age who prefer their own pleasure, profit, aggrandizement, to the presence, glory, and claims of the Son of God? Reader, do you?

We read next, that when the demoniac was

delivered of the legion of evil spirits, he came to Jesus, and prayed that he might be with him. How natural is that trait! He felt that there was safety only under the shadow of his great Deliverer. He feared the return of the evil spirits, and he felt that He alone who exorcised them was able to repel them and keep them at a distance. But Jesus "suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." What a token was here of the grandeur of the character of Jesus! If Jesus had been what sceptics and infidels assert he was, a mere pretender, he would have carried with him into every province of Judea this wonderful monument or token of his power. He would have taken him as an attesting witness wherever he went, and have let the multitude thus see what his power was, that seeing such a monument of it, they might recognize, serve, obey, and adore him. But instead of that, with a quiet majesty that felt the day would come when this testimony would have its proper effect, he says to him, "No, you are not to remain with me. Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee; that is to say, You have got a great blessing; now go and make it known. Whatever a man has that has benefited him, and that is fitted to benefit others, by the laws of his nature he feels disposed to circulate. A person never long keeps a monopoly of good news. He feels an instinct within him, originally from God, and that when sanctified still sustains the missionary, to tell others where they may taste

the blessings which he has so richly received. And Jesus does not say, "Go and stand upon a mountain top, and proclaim it; go forth as a preacher or a missionary; but he says, "Go and tell it at home, and see how you succeed in that little congregation; and then will be the time to go forth and speak it to the larger congregation of the world." Sometimes excellent Christian young men come to me, and say, "We wish to be ministers or missionaries of Christianity." My first statement is this: You must not suppose that when a man becomes a true Christian, he must become a preacher; else, were all preachers, where would be the people to hear? Besides, when you have tasted the power and influence of the Gospel, it is not necessary that you should preach in order to do good. You may speak by the quiet and unobtrusive purity of your walk, by the word dropped in season—behold, how good it is! and you may speak that most eloquent of all sermons, a holy and consistent life; and those who are about you, seeing a mighty change for the better, will inquire what is the secret spring of such a transformation; and then you will tell them the good things the Lord has done for you. And again, I would say to such who express such a feeling, Go first and see what you can do in our schools, or in your own home. Can you speak to those who are about you, your servants, sisters, brothers, or parents? Can you say a good word to them? Can you acquit yourself well as a private missionary? If so, then you may be accepted as a public one. There is great common sense in the apostolic

requirement that St. Paul lays down, that he who assumes to be a minister of the Gospel must be one who rules well in his own house; as if he should try what he can do at home, before he enters the great field of missionary enterprise.

We then read that the demoniac was seen by his friends sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. What a beautiful change was here! Sitting at the feet of Jesus, the place of safety, the place of a pupil, the place of endearing reminiscences;—sitting at his feet, in order to learn more of that wondrous message which he came to seal with his precious blood. And clothed—no longer in torn and tattered garments, amid the tombs, an outcast and an exile from society, but clothed and in his right mind. What the Gospel makes an individual, it can make a nation. If we wish to see the demoniac amid the tombs, we can call to recollection the shattered thrones, the exploded dynasties of the past, the tumults of the people, the precariousness of power, the fearful elements that are seething and surging beneath many parts of the continent of Europe. Take Italy, or Rome alone, and there you have the nearest type of the demoniac amid the tombs, outcast, torn, miserable, wretched. And then come to our own land, with all its faults and its defects, and think what it is that has made it so great, and comparatively so good. What is it that has made Britain the scene of peace, of temperate power in those who rule, and of loyalty, love, and allegiance in those who obey? What has made it the place of comparatively happy homes, open Bibles,

and altars free? What has made it clothed and in its right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus? The glorious Gospel preached in the midst of it; the open Bible, and the noble freedom of understanding what it means, and saying what it means, with no power on earth to repress or put us down.

We have, after this, another picture. One of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, came and asked Jesus for his daughter at the point of death. But between this application of Jairus, and the answer to it, there is an interesting episode, which relates to a woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and who had applied to many physicians, but, as many people find still, she got worse instead of better. But at last she went to the right one. My dear friends, what is often true of physical diseases is most true of spiritual ones. Try the priest, your own attainments, or any human source whatever, and you will get rather worse than better; but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, make application to him, and he will heal you. The question of Jesus, "Who touched my clothes?" was simply to bring the woman to a sense of himself as the great source of healing virtue, and to make her truly thankful, as well as obedient to him. It did not imply that he knew not who had touched him, or that he was not aware that healing had gone forth from him, but that he wished her clearly to comprehend the Author of the cure, to feel the gratitude that was due for it, and to go forth and live accordingly.

We then read of the ruler who came and asked

for the recovery of his daughter. Here is an instance of prayer for a temporal benefit; and that prayer which the ruler offered for his daughter twelve years of age, you may offer for your relatives. I have often said that in prayer we are to express to God every want that we feel, temporal, spiritual, or eternal. It is not your part to discriminate, and say, "I will not pray for this blessing, lest it be not for my good." It is the prerogative of Him who gives the blessing to determine what is for your good, and what is not. You pray for the blessing that you feel you most need, and leave God to give when, where, and how he pleases. Jesus immediately came to the ruler's house with certain friends and witnesses, and when he was come, he remonstrated with him, and said, "Be not afraid, only believe." He had asked him to come, and he ought to have rejoiced, and to have cherished a hope that Jesus would not forsake him till he had granted all his desire. Then our Lord said, in words truly instructive, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Here is the Scripture portrait of death. It is a sleep; and what is sleep? A momentary refreshment of the physical powers preparatory to the morn, when you go forth again to toil. And what is death? A momentary repose preparatory to the everlasting morn, when you go forth again to enjoy. The last sleep of a believer is everlasting and joyous refreshment. Milton very beautifully describes Adam as fancying that he was about to die when he first slept; and many of you may recollect how, when young, you have fought with sleep, and shrunk from it, as if unwilling to

surrender yourselves to the power of another. And what is that but just a foreshadow of the last sleep, which is not extinction or annihilation, but a momentary repose and refreshment preparatory to everlasting joys at God's right hand, and pleasures that are for evermore? Our sleep at night is each day's death; our life is, as it were, taken from us every night, and restored every morning. When you fall asleep, literally and truly you give up yourself. As long as I am awake, I feel that I have a hold of life; but when I sleep, I have lost my grasp of it—I have surrendered myself into the keeping of the great Watchman of Israel. And why so? Just to give me a foreshadow and presentiment of that death, which is only the sleep of a moment preparatory to everlasting joy. And what is old age, when all the limbs become stiff, the hair becomes grey, and the walk becomes slow and staggering? It is just the same to life as the late evening is to the weary workman. Towards ten or eleven at night he becomes sleepy, and at last he slumbers. The old man is beginning to get sleepy; the evening of life has come, and at last, softly, like a babe, he lays his head upon the last pillow, and falls asleep in the bosom of his Lord, and wakes in the morning into everlasting life. May our last sleep be this, for Christ's sake. Amen.

NOTE.—*Talitha*, in the ordinary dialect of the people, is a word of endearment addressed to a young maiden.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER VI.

LABORS OF JESUS—OBJECTIONS TO HIM—REASON OF REJECTION
— IMPORTANCE OF FAITH — MISSIONARY PREPARATION AND
APOSTOLIC COMMISSION—MARTYRDOM OF JOHN — REASON OF
IT—FEMALE DEPRAVITY—MIRACLE OF LOAVES AND FISHES—
THE STORM.

IN the chapter we have now read, it is first of all stated, that He came over into his own native place, and was followed there by the disciples, who were attached to him, partly because of the lessons that he taught, and partly because of the benefits which he had bestowed upon them. It appears, that on the Sabbath day, as if resolved not to lose a single opportunity of usefulness, he began to teach the great lessons that he came to seal by his blood, in the synagogue, where the Jews permitted a stranger Jew to address them, and to unfold, as he might be able, any lessons that he might desire to teach them. When they heard Jesus preach, they were so struck with the simplicity of his words, the sublimity of his doctrine, and the love and affection that shone in every sentence, as well as the unwearyed assiduity with which he taught, and the solemn emphasis with which he spoke, that they said, ignorant who he was, and of the great object of his mission, or the glory of his character as God mani-

fest in the flesh, "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?" And then they said, "Is not this the carpenter?" Perhaps this is not the correct rendering of the original. The Greek word is τέκτων, "one who builds, or constructs, or arranges," from which comes our word "technical," and when connected with fire, our word "pyrotechnist," a person who works in fire. Hence, the word τέκτων would seem to imply a person who does some works, without specifying what they are. They said, "Is not this one whom we know to have labored with his own hands? Is not this the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." What is this man, that he should make such pretensions? Who has given him this supernatural wisdom? How is he better than we? They tried to weaken the effects of the message by tracing the genealogy of the man; but it is not who says it, but what he says, that we ought to regard. It is not the genealogy of the minister ecclesiastical or otherwise, but the faithfulness with which he speaks, the fulness of the truths that he utters, and the fact that he can substantiate the lowest and loftiest lessons that he impresses by a reference to that Word which decides all controversies without appeal, the law and the testimony, that we should regard. Jesus did not recriminate,—this would not have been like him—but instead, he made a remark which has passed

into an aphorism, "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country." There is a great truth here. The more closely that we know the greatest man, in many respects the less he will appear. "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view;" and when the greatest come down from the loftiest eminence, and are scrutinized and seen at every angle, and beheld in every light, it is seen that there is upon the whole but a very broad dead level of humanity; and that, whatever be the extrinsic distinctions of our nature, its leading and substantial characteristics are everywhere and always the same. It is only unprecedented and unparalleled greatness that will bear the microscope of a near inspection; it is the few and the far between that will stand the minutest and closest examination. We all seem much less to ourselves than we do to each other; and such a feeling, whilst it should not degrade us in our own estimate, ought to humble us in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God.

Jesus then called his disciples, and left the place where he was, because, he said, "he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." This seems strange; Omnipotence is omnipotent everywhere—why could he not do miracles here just as he had done them elsewhere? The answer is, that He made it the law of his procedure on earth, that he would only give to faith the fulness of power,—that he would only put forth power where there was trust and confidence in his willingness and power to do the miracle. This is plain from the 6th verse,

where it is said, "he marvelled because of their unbelief." Evidently that was the secret of his inability to do many mighty works there. It is just to be explained in the same way as that God will not save a soul without faith; God will not bless, unless there be true repentance; that is, he treats man as a rational and responsible being, and not as an automaton or machine; and expects that if he gives, there shall be in man the receptive disposition to welcome in conscious love what God so freely bestows.

He then sent forth his apostles; and in the corresponding passage in Matthew, it is said, that he sent them two by two. Here it says, that they were to take "nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats;" that is, they were not to load themselves with superfluities, but to go just as they were. The danger of the perishing is imminent; your duties to them are instant; let the dead bury the dead; go in God's strength, and in obedience to his word; and He who gives the command will give the blessing that will more than sustain, and strengthen, and provide for you. I know this has been quoted as a precedent for modern missionary enterprise, but it seems to me that it is quoted in violation of common sense and plain Scriptural intimations. These men who were here commanded to go forth without two coats, and without money in their purse, or provision for their journey, were able to do miracles, to speak in tongues, and had the special promise of the special presence of the Lord Jesus Christ him-

self. If we can speak tongues without learning, if we can heal the sick and raise the dead, then we may go forth with exactly the same accoutrements, without provision, or preparation: but if it be the law of the economy under which we live, which none can doubt, since it is felt by all, that unless there be means, there will be no end; that if a man will not work neither should he eat; that study is requisite for excellence, and preparation for effect,—then we must believe that God will give the best blessing to the best means used most diligently and prayerfully in reliance on his presence.

The words addressed by Jesus to the apostles are very solemn.—“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.”

Judged by the analogy of all their proceedings, the apostles asked submission, not to themselves, but to their blessed Master; or credence, not to the opinions of John, Peter, or Paul, but to the inspired truths of the Holy Spirit that actuated them.

Some will receive the truth when it is preached to them, and some will reject that truth. The words of Jesus to his apostles assume a class that receive it and a class that reject it. This was illustrated in the soil receptive of the good seed, and productive of corresponding harvests; and we saw the rejection of the truth illustrated in the soil in which nettles

and thorns grow up and choke the seed, where the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world prevent the seed from growing up; not because the word has lost its power, but because the heart of the hearer has parted with its susceptibility of saving and of sanctifying impressions.

We also gather from these words that varied opportunities of improvement are given to different men. On one soil the sunbeams and the shower perpetually fall; upon another soil there seems to rest a blighting and perpetual shadow. Some men, wherever they go, come into contact with the truth; other men seem never to have an opportunity of hearing that truth in its purity, or pressed home upon their conscience with anything like effective power. Why it is so, it is not for us to explain. The same difference that appears in the natural world is exhibited in the spiritual, and all that we can say is, that if Jerusalem was raised above Gomorrah, and if England has been raised above Jerusalem, it has been, not from any excellence in the first, or demerit in the last, but because that "so, Father, it seemed good in thy sight."

God takes account of the amount of opportunities of spiritual improvement that we have. We think that he sees not, or that the privileges that we enjoy are too trivial for him to take notice of; but it is no more difficult for Deity to take notice of an atom, than it is of an archangel. The mightiest things are not beyond his control, the minutest things are not beneath his inspection: and these are not minute, but very mighty things. Our responsi-

bility God takes exact notice of: he unweariedly sees; he patiently waits: the only comfort that we have is, that God will not bring us to account for what we never had, but only for what we have. God makes us answerable for what he gives, not for the misuse or the ignorance of what he gives not.

We gather from the passage that a day arrives, either at each individual's departure, or when the great white throne shall be set, and all shall gather round it,—some with the pale face of dismay, others with faces gleaming in the sunshine of everlasting happiness, on which we shall give in our account to God. At that great day Sodom shall answer for what it had, Gomorrah for what it had, Jerusalem for what it had, and England for the privileges it has; and each individual in each shall render an account to God, not merely for deeds done, but for opportunities enjoyed, the knowledge possessed, and the blessings that we received. Not only shall we reap what we have sown, but we shall be answerable for what God has given us; not only shall we be called to account for what we have done, but for what we have tied up and laid aside in a napkin, as if God were a hard taskmaster, reaping where he had not sowed. The greatness of our present privileges is the measure of our future responsibility. Blessings that are now tasted at the footstool God will summon up to witness for or against us at the throne, and we shall answer for their use or their abuse as our state may be. "I was in prison," (there was an opportunity of sympathy,) "and you

did not visit me ;” “ I was naked,” (there was an opportunity of beneficence,) “ and you did not clothe me :” whereas, it is said to the righteous, “ I was in prison, and you came to me ;” “ I was sick, and ye visited me :” showing that an opportunity of knowing the truth is a responsibility, an opportunity of doing good is a responsibility, just as inseparable from us as our own immortality. Every appeal that was made to you for aid, every appeal that was made to your hearts for sympathy, every opportunity that was given you for doing good, and that you put off or treated with indifference, if the day of retribution overtakes you, will rise and track you with its footsteps on the same floor on which you stand waiting for an everlasting sentence ; and God will show that if we of the nineteenth century have had more opportunities, it is that we may more deeply feel the corresponding weight and pressure of the responsibility that attaches thereto.

Let us ask, then, when we think of it again, comparing ourselves with the cities of the plain, whose smouldering and sulphureous ruins are all that attest that they once were ; and with the churches of Asia, whose candlesticks are broken or utterly removed ; or with Jerusalem, once the joy of the earth and the beauty of every land ; what we have in this land of ours, what privileges, what mercies we so richly enjoy, and then reflect what responsibility before God lies on us. When we look at the defects of our own land, — at the abuses unremoved that ought to be removed, — at the things undone that ought to be done, — we are sometimes disposed to think unjustly

of it; but when we feel so disposed, oh! think of its beautiful Sabbaths, with comparatively few and thin shadows cast upon them — of its open Bibles, without a pope to shut them, or a grand duke to imprison for reading them, or a priest to burn them — of the Gospel so faithfully, so fully preached in so many pulpits and in so many parishes — not so many as we could wish, but in more than the Gospel was ever preached in since the days of the apostles themselves, — think, I say, of all these the inestimable privileges of our land, and you will not only be more thankful for what you have, but you will feel how responsible we are in the sight of God for the use or the abuse of them. Verily, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for us, if we receive not the things that belong to our eternal peace.

At the last reckoning, you will notice, God looks more at the opportunities of improvement we have lost, at the privileges we have misused, than at the actual sins we have perpetrated. It ought never to be forgotten that the condemning sin in our case will not be so much the wickedness we have done, but the rejection of the remedy that was offered; and so our condemnation will not be the past sins we have committed, but the present rejection of the only remedy provided for the pardon of those sins. What does our blessed Lord say? “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but that men have loved darkness rather than light.” “He that believeth not is condemned already.” Why? “Because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God.” The sins you have committed are

heinous enough,—if indeed they are to be compared in heinousness,—without this superadded sin, namely, the rejection of the only Saviour, whose blood can wash them all away; and therefore, he says, the responsibility of Sodom and Gomorrah and Jerusalem will be that they had privileges and opportunities and blessings which they did not use, or in the use of which they did not accept the only remedy provided for their restoration and recovery. Now if this be so, that our great and condemning sin, wherever a condemning sin is found cleaving to us, will be, not what we have said, thought, or done, but that we have rejected the only atonement, sacrifice, and Saviour; then let us remember that every day that shuts down on us as strangers to the power of living religion, adds to the weight of our guilt, and deepens our responsibility in the sight of God. A day slips past us, and we think nothing of it; but that day has left upon us an influence that the waters of death will not wash out, that will appear fixed, permanent, indelible at the judgment bar of God himself. It is one of the most solemn truths in all God's providential or inspired records, that one day gives its coloring it may be to eternity, that a deed may be done in a single hour that will rise in echoing crashes, and reverberate throughout everlasting ages.

It is one of the most solemn thoughts, that the acts of the present life have inexhaustible retribution when this present life shall have passed away. What solemnity does this give to the seed-time; what emphasis does this give to that word *now* :

and of what importance is to us the consciousness that our present character will be reflected for ever; that he that is unjust at death is unjust for ever; that he that is unholy, is unholy for ever! What an emphasis does this give to every address; what worth to every moment as it slips past; what a solemn call to lay hold upon every opening and avenue for instruction, usefulness, and good, and to consecrate all to that best and noblest of ends, the glory of God and the safety of the never-dying soul!

There is no excuse whatever for neglecting or misusing the opportunities of salvation that you have. If there be a valid excuse in any man's case for not being a Christian, then that man will never be condemned at the judgment-seat of God. I say, if there be in your case a valid excuse for not being a Christian, then there is no guilt in your not being a Christian. It is rather odd for one to speak of an excuse for not being a Christian — an excuse for not being happy — an excuse for not wishing to be happy: it seems an absurdity; when it is weighed and examined, it almost confutes itself: and yet men do make excuses; "I have married a wife, and I cannot come." All sorts of excuses have been made; and if they be valid excuses, then there is no sin in stopping away. But there is no excuse in the universe for not being a child of God and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. If God does not offer the blessing to you, then you are justified in not being a Christian; or if God lays upon you some overwhelming pressure, or reprobative decree that

sinks you to hell against your own will, then you are to be pitied; but if it be true, that to every soul under heaven there is offered instant peace with God, just on condition that that soul will take God at his word, believe and act accordingly, then there is no excuse for not being a Christian, and all pretence is dissipated: it is not that you *can* not be, it is that you *will* not be saved; and if it be true that Jerusalem had these truths stated more clearly than Sodom ever had; if it be true that our country has these truths more fully and frequently reiterated than former countries had, then our responsibility is just the exact shadow and measure of our opportunities of spiritual instruction. We have what they had not,—the complete Bible, the risen and interceding Lord, the Holy Spirit waiting to convert and to sanctify. Sodom and Gomorrah and Jerusalem lived in the gray and misty dawn; and if they perished in their sins, because they saw not Christ, then how shall we escape if we neglect the Saviour who has risen like the sun above the horizon, with healing under his wings? And if it be true, that our opportunities are every day and every year becoming fewer; if it be true, as thinking minds and grave minds seem to conclude, that all Europe is more or less sinking into superstition and despotism, and inclosing this isle of ours like a terrible girdle of thick night; if it be true that this is to be the only Goshen in the midst of European Egypt; if it be true that this is to be the only spot where freedom will have its footing,—where there shall be pure religion and holy altars, and men with the noble pre-

rogative of worshipping God in the way that they think best; if it be true that even this isle will come under judgments for its past unfaithfulness, and, it may be, be cast down, but not cast off, for the sins it has committed against God,—then the very shortness of the day, the very nearing of the night, ought to make us “now, while it is called to-day,” do what we can do, “for the night cometh when no man can work.” And if even this should not be so,—and we have not a certain knowledge of it, but only a vague, it may be, or probable, conjecture,—we know this, that if Christ do not come to us, if we do not live to the day when he shall come to the earth to make it and us happy, that we shall be taken to him. If it be true that beyond the grave there are no means of instruction,—that character exists externally as it has been formed in time,—that man continues ever what man is now,—that just as a man now sows, he will for ever and for ever reap,—that eternity is only the endless retribution of what is done in time,—then seize the moments as they sweep past; be sure that you are found in Christ, resting on him, trusting in him, loving him, sacrificing in his service, and having hearts beating responsive to his bidding always; and then come life, come death, it will be well with you. Can you conceive a more awful recollection than this in eternity, that you have lost opportunities you might have seized,—that you were within an inch of heaven, and missed it,—that you might have been saved, and would not be saved? If it be most awful to a noble mind to be conscious

that we have been ungrateful to one who deserved gratitude, how painful must be the ceaseless and tearing recollection, that we have been ungrateful to God, disobedient to his law, and destructive to our noblest interests!

And let me notice, in the next place, what is no less important, — that, if you do not now decide for Christ, if you be not now converted, every day that elapses without a saving impression upon you, only renders more hopeless the prospect of your everlasting happiness. We become habituated to the calls of the Gospel; solemn calls lose their point, because our hearts have lost their susceptibility. The arrow that pierced the heart falls by and by blunted and broken from it, and the voice that stirred our feelings like a trumpet, ceases at last to have any effect at all. God gives up the barren ground, just as you would give up a tree that you have watered and manured and labored on, when it brings forth no fruit. You would say, “Cut it down, it only cumber the ground; it not only takes the place that a fruitful tree might have taken, but it distributes around it a baneful shadow that prevents other trees bearing fruit.” I think it a very solemn thought, that no man can live for himself: there is no such thing as pushing through the world without making men better or worse; there is no such thing in this wide world of ours as a blank; every man is either a blot that stains it, or a blessing that does it good: a blank he cannot be. What a solemn thought, then: if we are not bearing fruit, if we are not distributing around us good influences, if we are

not making the world better for having been in it, we are in some shape, in some sphere, to some extent, doing mischief and evil to mankind. If such opportunities as those I have stated be ours, if the abuse of them shall thus be exacted at the judgment-day, if the continuance of them is dependent upon our right use of them, then believe in the Saviour, receive the words of the apostles, rest upon him; say, "Blessed Jesus, to whom can we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" say, "Where thou goest I will go; thy God shall be my God, and thy people shall be my people." Decide that you will look at every thing in the light of the Bible,—that you will determine your conduct everywhere by what God says,—that you will live, in the language of the Shorter Catechism, "in discharging the main duty of man, which is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." What prevents you, what prevents every man and woman in this assembly from being a decided Christian? Is it, let me ask, the fear of man which brings a snare? Are you afraid some one will scoff at you or despise you? What does that matter? Fear not him who, at his worst, can only kill the body, but fear Him who can cast soul and body into hell. Is it the love of the world? Is it that you wish a little more of its smiles, a little more of its wealth, a little more enjoyment of its prospects? The world's smiles will not be less beautiful, and the good things of the world will not be less so, because you look at them in the right light: you will moderately use the good, you will be thankful for the blessing, and you will be carefully

kept from the evil that is in the world. Or, are you afraid now to decide, because you fear the responsibility of a profession of the Gospel? It is a responsibility: he who says he is a Christian before God is bound to justify his assertion; but remember that when you take the duties of the Christian religion, you do not go forth upon a warfare on your own account, in your own strength, but you receive with its duties and its dignities its strength. Decide, therefore, to confess the Saviour, — to love his name, — to glory in his cross, — to trust in his sacrifice, — to observe his will, — to do his commandments, — to commemorate his death, — and, wheresoever you are, not to be ashamed of that blessed Gospel which is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and you will find the earlier you decide the fewer difficulties you will have to encounter in the future, and the happier you will be in the present; for God himself hath said, “Them that honor me I will honor.” “Seek me early, and you shall find me.” “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.”

We have after this the remarkable history of the martyrdom of John, and of the iniquitous conduct of Herod, and of those who were associated with him, which we read in the previous Gospel of Matthew. This is, perhaps, more explicit and minute in its details than the account given there. Herod heard what Jesus was doing. He did not know it was Jesus, but said it was John risen from the dead. I do not know in the whole compass of Scripture a more remarkable proof of the power of conscience

than the exclamation of Herod on this occasion. Just recollect that Herod was a Sadducee. He disbelieved in the separate existence of the soul, and rejected the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead; but his conscience was mightier than logic, and the recollection of his crimes called up truths that he was willing and determined to deny; and he said, though he disbelieved theoretically in the resurrection from the dead, "This is John risen from the grave, in retribution of my cruel treatment of him, and no doubt he is come to punish me, as a messenger from God, for the cruel murder of which I made him the victim." This shows us how one single flash of conscience will destroy a whole creed, when that creed is founded on falsehood.

Then the account of the murder is given. "Herod had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her." Now all that John said to the tetrarch was, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." This was only what it was John's duty to do. If he had done less, he would have come short of his obligations; if he had said more, it might have bordered on recrimination. But having stated faithfully and fully, in the language of courtesy and affectionate rebuke, what he felt to be the duty that he owed to the tetrarch, the governor of the land; not Herod, it is said, the man rebuked, but Herodias, who felt that that rebuke that touched her assumed husband really rebounded and smote herself, "had a quarrel against John." Why

with John? If John said what was right, she ought to have regarded him; if he said what was wrong she ought to have confuted him; if he said what was worthless, she ought to have despised him; but on no ground was she warranted in having a quarrel with a man who dared to utter what he felt to be the language of faithfulness and truth, not to gratify himself, but to do her good. We read that Herod, so far from hating him, seems to have had—shall I say, the grace? no; but the courtesy, and the subduedness of nature, to take quietly what he said. You have here the bad man Herod, and you have here the depraved woman Herodias; but it is always the law that the corruption of the most excellent is always the worst. The angel falling stops not in his descent till he becomes a fiend. A woman degraded becomes more terrible in her degradation even than man. Herod took the rebuke because he felt it was true; Herodias repelled the rebuke, and worked it into an element of spite and revenge against John.

We read that Herod went so far in this matter, that he feared John. Why? "Knowing that he was a just man and an holy." There is sublimity in goodness; there is grandeur in moral greatness; there is a nobleness that the world cannot bestow. Herod so felt the moral power of the lonely Baptist, that he observed him—watched him; and when he heard him, he did many things—obeyed much that he said; and not only so, but he heard him gladly. It is possible for a preacher to be popular with his people, and yet they may exhibit none of the practi-

cal fruits that his preaching tends to produce. It is possible to admire the minister's eloquence, and yet to detest the minister's message. It is possible to be so charmed with the manner in which he says a thing, that you may yet afford to hate the matter, that smites the conscience, rebukes the life, and tells you that all is not right in the sight of God. And it is a great law that wherever the Gospel is truly and faithfully preached, making allowance for the failings of the best, and the defects of the holiest, a hearer who listens to it a certain time will either close with an offered Saviour, become converted and Christian, or he will become hardened, and go away, and, not behold the preacher, for that he cannot do, but desert him as one who has changed, when really and truly it is the hearer who has determined to persevere in ways that his conscience knows to be wrong. So Herod here was very sorry when the alternative was put before him, that his own rashness obliged him to adopt; but still he entered into it. The daughter of Herodias danced beautifully before him, and amid the strains of music and the splendors of the spectacle and the beauty of the *danseuse*, he was so charmed, that he "said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee," — a very rash offer, one that he ought not to have made, and one that she, if actuated by a proper sense of what was due to herself and him, would not have accepted.

But she went forth, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" That was very proper. She went and asked her mother, the best guide that a

daughter could possibly have, to what she should do. There was a trait of goodness in that. But the mother said, with infamous wickedness and cruelty, unworthy of the woman, disgraceful to the mother, "Ask the head of John the Baptist." Her own spite revived; the wickedness of her heart was renewed; and having power, she resolved to turn that power to the worst and most wicked account. "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king."

One wonders that a daughter would have done so; and yet it shows that a daughter may dance with grace and be a perfect beauty, and yet have a heart worthy of a fiend. She may have all the accomplishments that the world can admire, but be destitute of that inner beauty, that holy character, which God sees, and applauds, and registers in heaven. Here was the daughter of Herodias the admiration of a court on earth, but the execration of a court in heaven. Here was one who had all the accomplishments of this world, but had never learned the nobler accomplishment of loving the holy, giving deference to the good, doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with her God. One can scarcely conceive any person having the horrid and revolting depravity — not to say of heart, but — of taste to ask, not only for the death of the Baptist, which one can understand, but to ask, in order to gratify the infuriate vengeance that was in her heart, that she might have his head presented before her, that she might look with joy on the silent and pale lips from which once came forth the burning words of solemn and faithful rebuke. This was done.

Herod paid deference to his oath, and therefore he did it. Perhaps there was a latent feeling that as he would not get rid of his wickedness, it was well to get rid of the prophet who spake evil concerning him; and therefore, his deference to his oath was simply a pretext to cover the atrocious deed that he did. But you say, if he had made such an oath, was it his duty to break it? I answer, it is no one's duty to break an oath; but the sin here was in taking it, not in breaking it. The sin was in taking the oath to do wickedness, not in breaking that oath, when brought to a better mind. And this exculpates many who have been blamed. Luther, for instance, took an oath to remain a celibate for life; he chose to marry a nun. His sin was in taking the oath, if it was his sin, for it was in his ignorance; but he did no sin in violating what he saw to be wrong in the sight of God, and in doing, however late, what was just and right before him. The great offence is swearing to do what is wrong; it is a step in the right direction when you refuse to do the thing that is unequivocally wrong, notwithstanding the oath that you have taken to do it.

We read of the miracle Jesus wrought to satisfy the temporal wants of the people. The 34th verse is extremely expressive. One can almost see in the language of it, as has been remarked by Alford, that Mark was the companion of Peter; and it would seem as if Peter had been almost the penman of these words, — “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having

a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." You recollect what Peter says, "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Now this miracle of the loaves and fishes was unquestionably a true one; but yet it was not a greater miracle than a beautiful harvest. We think that the creation of a hundred loaves out of two was a miracle; and so it was, because it was an interruption of the continuous laws under which the world is governed; but it is not one whit less a miracle that a seed cast into the soil should germinate, and bud, and grow up into a stalk, and then into an ear, and then into the full corn in the ear, and finally the glad and beneficent harvest. But we are so accustomed to the spring and the harvest, the sowing and the reaping, that we call that the natural thing; and we are so unaccustomed to one loaf being transformed or multiplied into a hundred, that we call that the miraculous thing. The fact is, miracles are suspensions or interruptions of the existing order of things; but the existing order of things might have been different; and all that a miracle proves is, that the God who made the machinery has chosen to suspend or alter its action. But you will notice that all the miracles of Jesus had a prospective feature or character in them. In other words, they were not the putting nature out, but always the bringing nature up. The whole of nature is in an abnormal condition. It was never meant that people should be ill, or have wrinkles, or blind eyes, or deaf ears, or gray hairs, or old age; it was never meant that there should be

biting frosts, and wintry snows. All these things are the results of sin. They are most unnatural; they have been superinduced by sin. But all the miracles of Jesus were in the direction of retuning creation's strings, bringing them back to their lost harmony — restoring the sick, which is the abnormal state, to health, which is the normal state — bringing the sea into calm, the winds into quiet; and proving that nature had gone wrong, and that nature's Lord alone could put her right, and that he alone would do so.

And lastly, we have in this most interesting chapter the miracle of allaying the storm. Notice that Jesus went into a mountain to pray, whilst his disciples went on the ocean to toil. This teaches us that while we labor Christ intercedes; while we are on the sea, buffeting with the waves, he is on the mountain side pleading for us. They remained till about three o'clock in the morning without any help, and were giving up all for lost; but about the fourth watch Jesus came. You may be in trials, afflictions, sickness, for three watches; but at the fourth Christ, who never leaves nor forsakes you, will come. But very often the Redeemer gives relief in a way that we expect it not; and we think that instead of being Christ the Redeemer, it is an evil spirit come to torment us; and we are surprised and delighted when we find it is He whom the winds and the waves obey.

What proofs have we here of a present God! What beneficence is there in all these strokes of power! What evidence that the Redeemer came

forth into the world, who was once its Creator; and what ground for the blessed hope that He who gave these instalments of what shall be, these earnest of what is predicted to be, will one day come in the clouds with power and great glory, and restore all things, and let the world close, as the world began, with Paradise!

NOTE.—[5.] οὐκ ἠδύνατο. The want of ability spoken of is not absolute, but relative. The same voice which could still the tempests, could anywhere and under any circumstances have commanded diseases to obey; but in most cases of human infirmity, it was the Lord's practice to require faith in the recipient of aid; and that being wanting, the help could not be given. However, from what follows, we find that in a few instances it did exist, and the help was given accordingly. [6.] ἐθαύμαζε. This need not surprise us, nor be construed otherwise than as a literal description of the Lord's mind: in the mystery of his humanity, as he was compassed by humanity — grew in wisdom — learned obedience — knew not the day nor the hour (ch. xiii. 32), — so he might wonder at the unbelief of his countrymen. Καὶ περιῆγε, see Matt. ix. 35. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER VII.

CEREMONY AND MORALITY — CONCESSION AND COMPROMISE — THE
SURPLICE — BAPTISMS — CORBAN — WHAT IT IS THAT DEFILES
THE SOUL — SEAL OF CHARACTER — THE WOMAN'S POSSESSED
DAUGHTER — EPHPHATHIA — ALL THINGS DONE WELL.

You will here notice a fact that occurs so often in the intercourse of Christ with the Pharisees, that their greatest objections to the conduct of the apostles arose, not from a real or supposed breach of a moral law, but from a supposed or real breach of a ceremonial observance. They illustrate in this respect a great fact in the history of mankind, that whenever tradition and Scripture, man's word and God's Word, are placed upon the same level, it is only for a day that they can remain upon that level. The great result comes out, that no man can serve two such masters as these; either the tradition of man, or the truth of God, will gain the ascendancy. If man be corrupt, it is easy to see that he will prefer the master that pleases and propitiates his own depraved appetites, and hate the master who rebukes the wrong doing with the voice of a prophet, and pronounces it to be evil. And hence, whenever in the history of our world man's tradition and God's Word have been placed upon the same level, the

issue, in the lapse of a very few years, has been what our blessed Lord says was the case with the Pharisees, "Full well" — most consistently — "ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." There is no objection to obeying the commandment of man in its own place: it is only when that commandment is made an essential thing, though it have not its foundation in Scripture, or when it is raised to supremacy over God's Word, that it ought to be resisted, repudiated, and rejected. In things indifferent, do any thing that will please the most; in matters ecclesiastical, submit to much you dislike, if only it will secure peace; but in matters of essential moment, involving the glory of God, the safety of the soul, the ascendancy of vital truth, you may concede the largest husk of prejudice, but you must not give up the least living seed of eternal truth.

The great complaint of the Pharisees on this occasion was, that the disciples ate with unwashed hands. The Pharisees, it seems, were in the habit of "oft washing," or, — as it might be translated, — strictly, rigidly, and minutely washing their hands, and doing it, not as a matter of comfort, but as a matter of ecclesiastical tradition. They might have washed their hands twenty times a day, as a matter of personal comfort, — there could be no harm in that; but when they said that because they washed their hands, everybody else ought to do it as often, — and when they alleged that this washing of hands, was as essential a matter as keeping the weightier matters of the law, — then a thing in itself most

indifferent became the just ground of a righteous protest on the part of our blessed Lord, and his immediate apostles. So in the present day, one should bear many things so long as they are kept in their own place; but the instant they are raised to a prominence that does not belong to them, then silence is connivance, just as acquiescence would be treachery to God. For instance, when it was held by certain ministers of religion that they ought to preach in a surplice, and not in a black gown, as long as it was a matter of taste and convenience, nobody would have paid the least attention to it, but every one would have left them to wear what seemed to them consistent with the usage of a church, a nation, or an age, it mattering very little to the doctrine that one teaches what may be the color of the robe that one wears; but when the robe was put forward as symbolical, and when it was alleged that sacraments could not be rightly administered, nor could a minister preach efficiently, except in a particular robe, — when it was urged, not as a piece of personal and ecclesiastical etiquette, but as a matter of vital moment, — then the people of that church did most correctly when they protested against it, and insisted that the usage to which they had been accustomed for many years should, if changed, be changed for a right reason, and not for a Papal and Tractarian one. So in other matters — one prefers a liturgy, another prefers extemporaneous prayer: it is quite right that in these matters each should gratify his preference; but when the one who uses a liturgy says you cannot pray without it,

— or when the one who uses extemporaneous prayer says that a liturgy is necessarily Popery, — then you are elevating matters of detail into matters of vital importance; you are thinking that washen or unwashen hands have something to do with real religion; you are forgetting that the kingdom of God is not meat, nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Now, our blessed Lord, evidently in the spirit of the remarks I have given, tells the Pharisees what was the logical issue of the course that they had pursued — that the result was, that they fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups” — outwardly, in form and ceremony, whilst the main requisite in all acts of worship was wanting, — the homage and adoration of the heart. Then our Lord says, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God,” that is, most consistently, most naturally, just as it ever will be and ever has been, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

One other thought upon this passage, and it is on the words translated here, “washing of pots and cups,” and again, “washing of brazen vessels, and of tables.” It is remarkable that the Greek word translated “washing” is *βαπτισμοῦς*. Therefore, I allege, without entering at length into a matter of mere ecclesiastical controversy, we have in this

passage proof that if our Baptist brethren be right in immersing the whole body, — and I do not quarrel with them upon that subject at all, — we are not wrong in asserting and insisting that baptism is rightly administered by sprinkling. We have here tables mentioned, or, as it should be translated, couches, on which they reclined when they partook of their meals. It is quite absurd to suppose that these large pieces of furniture, twelve feet in length, were immersed deeply in water. We know, as a matter of fact, that hyssop was dipped into water, and that these couches were sprinkled ceremonially with it. Therefore, the inference is to me irresistible, that if *Βαπτισμὸς* does sometimes mean “immersion,” which it most certainly does, it means also sometimes “sprinkling.” And if so, it really is a discussion not worthy of being protracted, whether one should be immersed or sprinkled, as long as we hold this vital and inner requirement, “Except a man be born of the Spirit of God, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”

Our Lord then rebukes another part of the ecclesiastical tradition which prevailed among the scribes and Pharisees, that a man who had quarrelled with his parents might take the property which he ought to give to them in their old age to keep them from beggary, and consecrate it as “corban,” that is, something devoted to God; and then, when his poor aged parents asked him for bread, his answer would be, “I have devoted it,” as the Roman Catholic would say, “to pious uses, and therefore cannot give it to so profane a purpose as giving bread to my father

and mother." It is scarcely possible to conceive that ecclesiastical depravity could rise to such a pitch as to make such a devotion to pious uses an apology for withholding what was due to those connected with us. No man is warranted in giving to pious uses of any sort, if he has a parent who wants bread, or a relative who needs shelter. Charity ought to begin at home; only, it should not stop there. No pretext of the claims of the Church or the ministry will avail in the sight of God as an excuse for refusing to your children, parents, or relatives, bread when they stand in need of it.

Our Lord then explained to his disciples what it was that was really polluting in the sight of God. He said, it is not that which a man eats that pollutes him, but that which a man thinks, says, and does. It is not fasting or feasting that affects a man's moral character; because, if you should fast from Easter to Easter, you punish the organ that is not at fault, and do not touch the organ that is really at fault, that is, the heart. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders." These are the things that nestle in the human heart, and that really corrupt it by their presence; and any process which does not mortify these does not really purify the man. But the fact is, we have all a great deal of the Papal leaven,—we are all most ready to visit the body for the sins and transgressions of the soul. It is so much easier to mortify the flesh, than it is to mortify the lust of the flesh. It is so much easier to fast for a day, than to deny oneself a darling sinful indul-

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gence. It is so much easier to do penance by climbing with bare feet a rugged hill, or walking with pebbles in the shoes, than it is to repent of sin in the sight of God. For one that you can prevail upon to renounce the evil that nestles in the heart, you may prevail with great success upon thousands to submit to any bodily inconvenience. And hence the masterly conception of the Romish religion, that ever keeps you thinking of the body and its suffering as atonement and expiation for the sins of the soul; and that leads you to think that when you have died with what are called venial sins unforgiven, a turn in purgatory for a year or two, a little suffering in the body, will burn out all the sins of the soul, and all will be right, and pure, and happy, just as if you had never sinned. Let us never forget that the way to eradicate sin is to begin at the centre. It is the heart that is wrong — God alone can change it; but he waits ready to do so, as soon as he is fervently, honestly, and from the heart, entreated to do it.

We then read that a certain woman came to Jesus who had a daughter possessed of a devil. Plainly that was not a bodily disease, for we notice at the close of the chapter a bodily ailment as a thing totally distinct from a demoniacal possession. There is no doubt that Satan has innumerable legions of fallen fiends; and Scripture tells us that he and his are ever busy contaminating, corrupting, and misleading. And there is nothing at all contrary to what we should expect in the fact that one of these — a devil, not Satan the prince of the

devils—should enter into the human mind, and take up his abode there. They do so now, not in this shape, but in other shapes; and nothing seems to me more awful than that a fallen spirit should have direct contact with the human mind, suggesting the evil, suppressing the associations of the good, and tempting to sin against God and against mankind.

When this Gentile woman,—for the Jews called all people Greeks, who were not of Moses,—“a Syrophenician by nation,” besought him, Jesus said to her, evidently not to grieve or tantalize her, but to elicit her faith in him, “Let the children,” that is, the Jews, “first be filled: for it is not meet to take the bread that belongs to the nation to whom I have primarily come, and to give it to those that that nation rightly or wrongly calls dogs.” The Jews called themselves the clean nation, and all the rest of the world unclean; and as the dog, strangely enough, is referred to in Scripture seldom otherwise than as an unclean or impure animal, the Jews called all nations other than themselves “dogs.” That explains what the apostle says, “Beware of dogs.” He does not there mean Gentiles, but, beware of those that are evil, because “evil communications corrupt good manners,” or morals. When He had told her this, which was apparently a severe way of saying, “I must feed Israel before the Gentiles,” she was not repulsed; but, having a faith that overcame mountains and dissolved obstructions, she pressed closer to him, and said, “This is very true; but I do not ask you, blessed Lord, to withhold a morsel from the Jew, in order

to give me something: for if the dogs that are below the table are not permitted to eat of the food on the table, they are yet allowed to pick up the crumbs that are under it. Therefore, blessed Lord, give me, not the bread—that would be too much to ask—but give me the crumbs that fall under the table; these, dog as I am, I may be entitled to accept.” And Jesus, seeing that his first words only drew out the stronger faith of the applicant, said, “For this saying”—because you have shown such unflinching, unwavering faith—“go thy way: the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out.”

We then read of the cure of a deaf man by Jesus putting his fingers into his ears, spitting, and touching his tongue; “and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.” I noticed on reading the chapter in the morning (Exodus xv.), containing the account of the tree that was cast into the bitter waters of Marah, that Moses might, in obedience to God’s command, have healed the waters simply by a word, but God made him take a branch, and cast it into them. So here, Jesus might have unstopped the deaf ears, and unstrung the dumb tongue, simply by a word; but instead of doing so, he used a sacramental sign, an outward and visible pledge, that it was his power transferred from himself into the deaf ear, and into the dumb mouth, that enabled the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

The words, “He hath done all things well,” are the attestation of the crowd assembled together on

the streets of Jerusalem, and witnessing the deeds of power, the miracles of mercy and beneficence, which Jesus did. It is remarkable to notice, in the history of him who lived as never man lived, and spoke as never man spoke, and did what never man did, that sometimes his bitterest enemies were the first to acknowledge the magnificence of his doings, and sometimes his friends were backward in proclaiming the excellence of Him who ever did, and now ever does, all things well. It was the Scribes and Pharisees who said, "He saved others," though the inference that they drew was most unjust, because they had not light to see its meaning, or its mystery, "Himself he cannot save." And Pilate, when he had washed his hands, was constrained to say of him who was placed at his bar as a criminal, "I find no fault in him." But in the instance that is now before us, it was those who shared the riches of his beneficence who proclaimed the beautiful announcement, "He hath done all things well;" and they gave the grounds of that judgment, when they added to the proclamation of it, "He maketh the blind to see, and the deaf to hear." These facts are still on the page of history; the monuments of this mercy are amid the shining crowds of the sky; and thus, time with its thousand tongues, and eternity with its own emphatic one, conspire in proclaiming a truth that ever has been, and ever will be actual, "He doeth, and hath done, all things well."

It is also worthy of notice that the recipients of the distinguishing mercy of Jesus did not say, as

the more educated, but far more depraved Pharisees alleged, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." They did not say, as modern Christians are too prone to say, "It was the medicine that healed;" but they traced the links along the chain of beneficence, and saw that they all were held in the hand of Him who then did, and now does, all things well. When we are healed of a disease, it is as much a miracle as it was when Jesus touched the deaf ear, and said, "Ephphatha," Be opened. Why is there virtue in the medicine? who gave it its mysterious power? The difference is only this, that now God works with means, then he worked without them; but whether healed with or without them, we should look above the medicine, and beyond the physician, to the Lord Jehovah, who healeth all our diseases.

But if no human voice in that crowd had been raised to acknowledge Jesus as the healer of diseases, the blind, who saw the stars of the sky and the flowers of the earth for the first time; the deaf, who heard the sweet sounds of an affectionate voice they never heard before; the withered limbs, that were restored to more than their pristine vigor; the empty graves; the dead, who mingled again with the company of the living; could have all stood forth, and proclaimed, "We are witnesses that He hath done all things well."

CHAPTER VII. 37.

PRAISE OF JESUS — EXCELLENCY OF WORKING — CREATION —
PROVIDENCE — GRACE.

THE exclamation, "He hath done all things well," was the language of adoring gratitude and praise. It was a leaf from the Psalms of David. It was a text from the 103d Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his mercies." And if we feel that God heals us; if we believe that any blessing that we have is a leaf from the tree of life, let not the crowd rival us in the expression of gratitude and praise to the right Author, but let us also praise him for his goodness, saying, "He only hath done all things well." Blessings will not be long possessed that are not deeply appreciated; he will not be a long possessor, or a happy possessor, who is not a thankful possessor. Unacknowledged mercies are always the sharpest judgments.

By way of illustrating these words, "He hath done all things well," let me notice, first, Jesus as the Maker of all. One sometimes does not realize this. The hands stretched upon the cross created the vast universe. All things, says John, were made by Christ, and without Christ was not any thing made that was made. I have often thought this one of

the most touching pleas that a Christian can make. If you cannot say, "Blessed Jesus, thou hast redeemed me, therefore bless me," the worst may say in the darkest shadow of his life, and when he drinks its bitterest cup, "Blessed Lord, thou hast made me; thou hatest nothing that thou hast made; remake me, restamp the image I have lost, retune the instrument thou madest at the first, restore me, O thou by whom all things were made." It is a beautiful thought, that Jesus is the Maker of all. There is not a star that shines from the depth of the firmament above us, that received not its brilliancy from the Bright and the Morning Star; there is not a flower that beautifies the earth, from the first primrose of spring to the last rose of summer, that His breath did not give fragrance to, and His touch all its exquisite beauty and its lasting tints. There is not a stone or a pebble, or a creature, from the angel that is before the throne to the emmet that the microscope can scarcely detect, that Jesus did not make. He made all things; and more than that, He made all things well. His own attestation is my proof, "And God saw that it was very good." When the earth came from his hands, it was like a brilliant diamond, on which the name of the maker was deeply and beautifully engraven, and from which the image of God was brilliantly reflected; and wherever in the earth you detect a flaw, — wherever in creation you find an imperfection, never forget that God did not make that. Sere leaves were not made by God; gray hairs, wrinkles, old age, headaches, heart-aches, all the ills that flesh is heir to, God never made.

You ask whence they came. That has perplexed many in every age: there is but one solution: sin entered, and death by sin; and all these accompaniments of it shall be excluded when Christ shall create all things anew, and pronounce the new world better than the old; and when angels and men shall sing in one grand anthem, "He hath made all things well."

But Jesus is not only the Maker of all, he is also the Ruler of all. While such elements as I have alluded to have entered into the world he will not allow them to go beyond his control. I do not think it is always right to speak of God as sending disease or calamity; I would like rather, and I think it is not less scriptural, to view the bounding heart, not the broken one, as sent by God. I would rather see Him in all that is bright, beautiful, and beneficent, than in all that is dark, sombre, and unhappy. But while God may not send calamities, it is no less true that he controls them. Does your health waste away, and your beauty, in the language of the Psalmist, consume as a moth? It is that you may lift up your hearts to something more glorious and enduring, and see in the worst that betides you something done well, and working well for you. Does a bereavement take away those that you love? Does death darken the sunshine that irradiated your threshold, and brightened your happy home? It is well; it is God taking the element of evil your sins introduced, and making that element of evil the cup that overflows with beneficence, mercy, and love. If He has broken the cistern from which you drank too

passionately, it is that you may appeal to the fountain. If He has removed the sun that shed down his splendor upon your life, it is that as the night comes in and conceals the one sun that is above, and the earth that is beneath, it may unveil to you 10,000 suns in the sky of yet richer splendor. Is the gourd that you almost adored cut down? It is that you may leave the gourd, and seek a shadow beneath the tree of righteousness, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. There is not a Christian that on his last bed will not be constrained, if he take an impartial retrospect of all the past, to bless God as much for his dark days as for his bright ones,—as heartily for his bitter cups as for his sweet ones; and he will learn that when God dried up the streams on the hill, it was only that he might go to the richer valleys below, and find unseen a fountain so deep, that it cannot be frozen by winter's frosts, and so overshadowed by the everlasting hills, that it never can be evaporated by the heat of the summer sun. Of all we shall be constrained to say, "He hath done all things well."

And what happens to us as individuals is no less true in the government of nations and the world. We sometimes think, when we hear of convulsions in states, that the world is going to pieces,—that God has let go the reins, and that the mirror of creation will be dashed to fragments. It is not so. God is doing all well; and when the earthquake shall have ceased its vibrations, we shall be constrained to see what we could not see in the process, but what we find in the result, that God our Saviour hath done all things well.

But, let me look at Christ as acting in redemption; and here it is almost supererogation to say, He hath done all things well. Has he made an atonement? This he did perfectly, and once for all, when he made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. He has conquered death and the grave so completely, that the dying saint can sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" He sends the Spirit truly to all that seek him, to make them fit for heaven. Is it, again, the institution of a Christian ministry, or Christian sacraments? This Christ hath also done well. They both are guides to Him; and should lead you to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And his presence with his Church; is that real? That also is done well. Why has the bush blazed on every hill, and yet never been consumed? It is because Christ has fulfilled the promise that he made, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

How often do we fail to realize all this! And why so? Because we judge of things often without God. Exclude God from all providential history, and it is the extinction of the sun from the firmament,—the exhaustion of gravitation from the universe itself. Again, we judge too much from sense. We say, what tastes bitter must prove in its effects bitter. But the most bitter draught may be the most precious medicine. And again, we often misjudge God's doings by judging too prematurely. We see but the beginning of God's great plan; we do not see the whole before us; and would it be rational to

judge of the beauty of a palace upon the inspection of a single brick? Let us rest in the Lord, and be patient; and we shall see that what feels most painful is but another proof that He hath done all things well. But again, we often judge selfishly. Instead of regarding the whole universe as God's province, we think each himself to be the great centre, and look at every thing in the light of our own well-being. Let us never do this; let us not rashly pronounce verdicts on the doings of God, but conclude, in the language of my text, what all creation will evolve as the result of all his dispensations in individual cases, in social, national, and universal government, "He hath done all things well."

NOTE.—These *Βαπτισμοὶ*, as applied to *κλιῶν*,—meaning probably here couches (triclina) used at meals,—were certainly not immersions, but sprinklings or effusions of water.

[36.] See ch. i. 4, 5. [37.] *καλῶς πάν. πεπ.* So *πάντα, ὅσα ἐποίησε, καλαλίαν*, Gen. i. 31. This work was properly and worthily compared with that first one of creation,—it was the same beneficence which prompted and the same power that wrought it.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS MINISTERS TO BODILY WANTS—PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS CONNECTED—MIRACLE OF LOAVES—GREAT FACTS AND SIMPLE DESCRIPTIONS—PHARISEES NOT SATISFIED—LEAVEN—BLIND MAN CURED—REDEMPTIVE NATURE OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES—CHRIST'S PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH—A CROSS FIRST—PETER, SATAN, AND ROCK—OUR CROSS—THE SOUL.

WE have, first of all, in the chapter I have read, the record of a miracle, also given in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, perhaps at greater length. Jesus feeds a multitude, disproportionately to sight and sense, with a few loaves and fishes. He had compassion on the multitude because of their natural and bodily wants. To these bodily wants, as well as to spiritual necessities, he ministered on every occasion that occurred in the providence of God, during the whole course of his ministrations throughout the land of Palestine. And it is a very interesting and blessed thought, that whilst the safety of the soul is not too high for Jesus to secure, the lowest pang of the poor perishing body is not beneath his blessed notice, sympathy, and inspection. You must also have noticed, in the course of our Lord's ministry, that whilst he was always and everywhere alive to the spiritual necessities of the soul, he never failed

to make a ministration to the wants of the body a stronger reason for the opening of the mind to the lessons that he taught, and the heart to the impressions that he desired to make upon it. Jesus, throughout all his ministry, accompanied spiritual with physical benefits and blessings. And I am quite sure of this, that at the present day, if the Church of Christ would also look more extensively after the physical well-being of those that are around it, its efforts to compass their spiritual well-being would not be the less successful. There are certain physical things that are positive obstructions to the reception of the truth. Let any one zealous for the salvation of souls go into some of the districts directly east of this church; let him go into places where the light of heaven can scarcely penetrate—where no warmth is given from the hearth—where there is no home, nor any of its decencies and comforts—where there is nothing but squalid misery, wretchedness, want, and famine,—and I think he would then discover what I am convinced of, that the first thing there to be done is, not merely to say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” but accept a blanket to keep out the cold, food for the hungry, and some of the decencies of life for those who are utterly destitute of them. It has been very much overlooked, but it cannot be overlooked long, that the physical well-being of the poor is a preliminary and Baptist-like step to their spiritual instruction and knowledge in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. These two, in the case of our blessed Lord, always went together, the one the pioneer to the other—nay, it was when he had done

the greatest good to the bodies of men that he seized the beneficence they had just tasted, and made that the pedestal of a spiritual and everlasting truth that their souls greatly needed. Here he first fed the hungry, and he then enlightened and instructed the soul.

When he spoke of giving food to such a multitude in the desert, his disciples, — judging, as man is ever prone to judge, only by what they could see, touch, and handle, — asked, “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” not recollecting the power that Jesus had shown, or the instances of Almighty beneficence that he had repeatedly exhibited. The Redeemer, with all the quiet that is the evidence of power, — with nothing of the excitement which indicates perplexity, — asked them, “How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.” He then commanded the people to sit down on the ground, simply for convenience, and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and set them before them; and all the people that were assembled there found in these loaves enough, and the disciples afterwards a surplus in his beneficence, for they gathered up seven baskets of the fragments that remained.

Now, here we have one of those stupendous miracles that are so simply told, that we are apt to lose sight of some portion of their sublimity; and it has always struck me as one of the indirect, but not least cogent, proofs of the inspiration of the sacred penmen, that they tell grand feats so simply. If a mere human historian had been recording such

a prodigy as this, he would have exhausted, if his taste had not been very good, language of its bombast; he would have called into aid expressions of admiration and wonder; and he would have been exuberant in poetical and grand descriptions of a miracle which would have overwhelmed him with its magnitude and greatness. But the sacred historian, as if he had dipped his pen in the light of Him who did the miracle,—as if he were writing under the inspiration, as he was, of Him whose deeds of beneficence he was recording,—tells the story with that artless simplicity which proves how true it is, and which shows indirectly how the penman was guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

We then read that the Pharisees came forth, and began to question him, seeking a sign from heaven. You naturally say, What sign could they want additional to this? If ever there were the credentials of a present God, surely such a miracle as this was not the least. What could they want to prove that Omnipotent power was here, beyond the creation of food for thousands out of loaves that were adequate only for a handful? But they wanted a sign from heaven, not because they desired to be convinced, but, we are told, because they wanted to tempt, grieve, ensnare, or provoke Jesus. The fact is, when men have once made up their minds not to be persuaded, they are unconvinced. It is a very lamentable fact, and one that reflects very little credit upon our kind—but how often do you see in places where debates are carried on, whether in the General Assembly of the Church, or in the Par-

liament of the land, that where certain numbers of persons have made up their minds upon any given subject, you may speak with almost Demosthenic eloquence, and yet you will fail to move them! You affect their judgments, not their votes. These Pharisees had made up their minds as to a conclusion, arising more from their own passions and interest than from sober conviction; and all the miracles that Jesus could do were utterly ineffective to convince them. If he had made the heavens blaze with unearthly splendor, and the earth glow with the reflection of the skies, and shown them ten thousand signs,—in fact, if they believed not Moses and the prophets, neither would they have believed if one were to rise from the dead.

Our blessed Lord warned his disciples of what he here called the leaven of the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Herodians; but it seems that the disciples, who had heard so much, and ought to have been more enlightened, misunderstood him, and thought, as we gather from a parallel passage, that he spoke of literal leaven. Jesus then argues with them: “Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?” It was the language, not of passion, but of quiet, gentle, yet faithful rebuke. They ought to have known the formulas of his speech, and the frequent figures that he employed, in order to convey spiritual and instructive lessons. But, strange enough, when man has been taught, he needs to be taught again; and thanks be to God that he does teach us, line upon line, and precept

upon precept; here a little, and there a little, — the Teacher never wearied, though the pupil so often fails to improve the lessons that he hears from him.

Next follows another miracle, that of the blind man having his eyes opened. It may be asked, Why did Jesus touch and anoint the eye in the way that he did? might he not have simply spoken the word, and the blind eyes would have been accessible to light? I answer, in every miracle that Jesus did, there was always a link visibly connecting the Doer of the miracle with the subject of the miracle; so that, whether it was a word, or a touch, or any thing else, it might always be seen that the miracle was done directly and unmistakably by the immediate power and agency of our blessed Lord. And when He had thus opened the eyes of the blind man, the blind man said that he saw men like trees, that is, misty — the human figure undefined — rather in masses than sharply and clearly developed, — just like trees, only with the peculiarity that they seemed trees walking. Jesus then touched his eyes again, and he saw every man clearly. He then told him not to tell any one in the town; for what reason I do not know, except probably not to excite the feelings of the people at that time, for purposes and from a foresight peculiar to himself. This, however, we may notice, that an ordinary man doing wonders, actuated by false motives, would have been too glad to spread what he did everywhere; but you will notice often that when Jesus did the greatest miracles, attested by competent witnesses and of sufficient number, he was content to

have it done in silence and retirement. The time, he knew, would soon come when what was done in secret would be proclaimed upon the housetop.

You will notice in all the miracles of Jesus, what I think is deserving of special study, their redemptive character. Every miracle that Jesus did was not a mere freak, if I might use the expression, of power; it was not a mere proof that God had power, or simply a proof that God had beneficence; but in almost every instance it was elevating man, the subject of the miracle, out of the abnormal state in which sin had placed him, into the original and happy state in which he was first created. All these acts of Jesus were in their place foreshadows of that day when all blind eyes shall be opened, and all deaf ears shall be unstopped, and when the lame shall leap like the hart and the roe, and there shall be no more sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing. Every miracle that Jesus did was an earnest, a pledge, and a token of that day when he shall wave his hand over all creation, and all things shall be made new, and a better genesis shall dawn upon the earth than originally passed upon it when God pronounced all very good.

Jesus then predicted his own approaching death and resurrection; and this was a very important prediction, because it showed that his death did not come upon him unawares, that he clearly foresaw it, that he was not surprised into Calvary, but that he anticipated a cross as the conclusion of his painful and sorrowing pilgrimage upon earth. But when he thus preached the great cardinal truth of Chris-

tianity, we find that Peter, ever rash to speak and often to do what was wrong, took him, and began to rebuke him, as if it were not meet that he should die — as if there could be a crown without a cross. But what Peter did to Jesus, we are prone to do still. It is what that Church that assumes Peter as its foundation does too sadly: for what is the Romish Church? It is an attempt to anticipate the Millennial Church, — an attempt to forestall the Church that will be. At present the Church is made up of tares and wheat, and is subject to privation, sorrow, and trial. She is a widow waiting for her husband; she is a bride waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. But in the Church of Rome, one sits as if he were seated on his Millennial throne, and the Church is raised to an extrinsic pomp and splendor as if she were not a widow. Indeed, she says, “I am not a widow; I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow:” and thus she has tried to anticipate the Millennial Church, and thought that she could reach the crown without going through the sufferings of the cross at all. And we ourselves all sympathize too much with Peter: we would rather avoid the cross, and snatch prematurely at the crown; we should like to get to heaven without tribulation, to reach the goal without trouble, to arrive at the end of the journey without the travel that is requisite before it; and we would rebuke those who should say, “Through much tribulation ye must enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus said to Peter, after rebuking him, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Once he was called — as you recollect when I explained

Matthew — the Rock, or the Stone. His succession in that particular is claimed; but when he is called Satan, his succession in that particular — which really is far more deserved by the body that claims him as a rock — is altogether repudiated. But if you take Peter as your founder because he was called the Rock, you may take Peter as your founder because he was called Satan. The fact is, he is not our founder in either respect: he is one of the stones laid upon the Rock, with many flaws and many excellences, saved not by his faith, but by the cross and passion of his Lord.

Then it is added, that “whosoever will come after me,” — that is, obey me, be my disciple, — let him deny himself much that he would like, much that he would prefer, and take up his cross. Whatever cross God may assign us in his providence, we are to take up, and seek that it may be sanctified by his grace; and, thus bearing our cross, we are to follow him.

And then that solemn exclamation is uttered, “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” What a consideration is this! What a solemn problem is this for us to solve! What will it profit you at the judgment-day, if you have become renowned, rich, prosperous, great, but have lost your soul? And just notice, it does not say that everybody who loses his soul is sure to gain the whole world. The gain of the whole world is problematical — it is, “if” he gain it; but the pursuit of that gain to the neglect of the soul ends in the certain destruction of the latter. And therefore, instead of making the world,

and the world's gain, our main thing, it ought to be subordinate; and the soul, and the soul's salvation, ought to be the object of our prayers, our fondest aspirations, and our noblest efforts. Suppose, in the pursuit of what is eternal and enduring, you lose all, you may again retrieve all; but if you lose the soul, that can never be recovered. If I lose my property, I may by industry recover it; if I lose my health, I may by care and skill regain it; but if I lose my soul, I never can recover it—it is hopelessly lost. God has made a beautiful law: you will find that those who have been born blind, or who have become so, have an exquisite sensibility of ear and touch that almost compensates for their misfortune; and so with the loss of hearing: as if God in this world would not allow any one to lose any blessing, without some compensation that will nearly equal it. But in the world to come, if we lose the soul, there is not only no restoration, but there is no compensation; it is endless, irretrievable, total loss. Oh, may we learn what the greatness of the soul is, not by its loss, but by its everlasting gain! Because so few feel the immensity of its value, we are not to infer that it is little. Sin deadens and destroys every true and pure and holy feeling, and makes man keenly alive to what is transient as a winter sunbeam, and totally insensible to what is infinite, eternal, vital.

What is the thing of greatest price,
The whole creation round?
That which was lost in Paradise,
That which in Christ is found.

The soul of man, Jehovah's breath,
That keeps two worlds at strife ;
Hell moves beneath to work it death,
Heaven stoops to give it life.

And is this treasure here below,
In earthly vessels frail ?
Can none its utmost value know,
Till flesh and spirit fail ?

Then let us gather round the cross,
That knowledge to obtain,
Not by the soul's eternal loss,
But everlasting gain.

CHAPTER VIII. 38.

ASHAMED OF CHRIST—WHO ARE SO?—REASONS ALLEGED FOR BEING SO—NOT SOUND REASONS—CHRIST ASHAMED OF SUCH.

It looks as if the reflection in the text had very much arisen from the fact, that Peter deprecated the atonement, suffering, and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as if Peter felt that to die was too humbling a thing for so great and illustrious a leader; and that if Christ died, whatever might be the value of his death, it would be a reason why they would be ashamed in preaching him among the Jews, and proclaiming his glory to the Gentiles,—a stumblingblock to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. Our blessed Lord, in order to anticipate such a feeling as this, wherever it should arise, gives them this warning, that “whosoever”—be he the chiefest of the apostles, or the least of saints—“whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed at that day, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

I will here offer some explanations of the grounds that are sometimes felt, if not openly alleged, why men are, if they do not admit that they are, ashamed

of the Gospel of Christ; and, secondly, I will endeavor to show what constitutes being ashamed of Christ, and of his words. What are some of the reasons why persons are ashamed, in this and in every generation, of Christ the Saviour, and of his Gospel? It sometimes occurs, because it is not a popular cause. Most men like to be on the winning side, and deprecate what seems apparently to be the losing one; and very many would follow a multitude to do what is evil, rather than cling by a forlorn cause, and follow the few that are right in principle. Now it must be admitted that the mere name of Christianity is popular enough; the mere forms, and ceremonies, and rites of it are scarcely stumblingblocks to the masses of mankind; but let any one assert that he feels all that he professes in the Creed; that his profession has its counterpart in the secret and silent depths of his heart; let his religion no more be shell, but kernel,—no more form, but reality,—no more a pretence, but a life; let him be in earnest what the masses of mankind profess to be in form,—and he will be one of a small minority; for it is still true that Christ's flock, the real, living, and converted company of them that believe in Jesus, is limited and little indeed. One reason, therefore, why some would be ashamed of real religion is, because it is not, in proportion as it grows vital, a popular cause. But, my dear friends, this ought not to be a reason for being ashamed of what is right. It is an honor to cling to the true, the holy, and the just, when all men denounce it. When we want to know what is duty, we must not count heads, but read texts.

Men are sometimes ashamed of Christ and his Gospel, because it is not always a profitable cause. To gain the world is an experiment that is often made, even when it involves the loss of the immortal soul; and very often persons in accepting a religion first feel the pulse at the wrist of Mammon, before they listen to the prescriptions from the mouth of God. They first ask, "Will this profit me?" and they accept the side that gives promise of the greatest gain, though it have the least of truth; and they reject the cause that has nothing to commend it, except what to a carnal soul is so paltry a thing, God for its author, truth for its matter, and eternal joy for its happy issue. But instead of being ashamed of the cause of Christ because it is not always profitable, you ought to recollect, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" You are never to compare the profits of earth with the prospects of eternity,—the gain of so much trash, with the loss of an exceeding weight of glory. At the same time, it ought to be stated, that adhesion to the truth is not always the loss of advancement in this world. I believe, that the man who seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, will, according to the promise, have all other things added unto him. The shortest route from one point to another is a straight line; and the shortest path from poverty to prosperity, you may depend upon it, is, in nine cases out of ten, the path of principle, allegiance to God, and truth. The least that is gained as a homage to your adherence to principle is most sweet. A whole

fortune realized by the sacrifice of conscience, will only be a corroding curse. Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel, when the loss of all is the sacrifice we must make. Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel, whatever be the issue of our adherence to it. Let us never forget God's own promise. "Them that honor me, I will honor." If you should quote the fact, that you know some one who has been a decided Christian, and has been launched into poverty, you are to recollect that if made rich, it might have been the ruin of his soul for ever. God will not always give us what looks to us best, but he will always add to his own, whether it looks so or not, what is most expedient for them.

Another reason why men are sometimes ashamed of the Gospel of Christ is, that *not many mighty, wise, or noble of this world are called. I admit, that in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where this expression occurs, it relates chiefly to the ministry of the Gospel; but it is no less true, that the great of this world are surrounded by so much to fascinate the eye, to ensnare the heart, to beguile the time, and to exclude from their thoughts, heaven, hell, God, the soul, eternity, that it is more strikingly the minority in the highest than in the lowest classes who embrace, not nominal religion, for that is popular and fashionable enough, but vital, personal piety, the love of God, devotion to his cause, and identity with all its sacrifices and sufferings in the midst of the world. But you are not to judge of a cause by the pageantry and pomp in its train. Truth remains true, when its advocates are marched to martyrdom;

and a lie is still a lie, when the splendor of the world is heaped upon its shrine, and the kings and nobles of the world constitute the chorus that shout hosannas in its praise. We are not to judge of a cause by the multitude of them that adopt it, nor by the rank or greatness of them that profess it. It is true if God has said it, though only fishermen and mechanics embrace it; and it is a falsehood if God has so denounced it, though kings and princes should all gather round it. God has instituted a new order of nobility, in comparison of which the patent of the most illustrious is poor. The Bereans were more noble, because they searched the Scriptures whether these things were so or not.

Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because of the afflictions that not only accompany its profession as a matter-of-fact, but that are predicted by our blessed Lord as part and parcel of the cross that we must carry. We are not deceived by our Master: He has told us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" but he has added, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." An apostle has told us, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, flesh and blood does not like to suffer; but suffering to a Christian is purely paternal; suffering to an unbeliever is entirely penal. When a Christian suffers, it is always because there is a needs be. Jesus would give you a cup all sweetness to drink, if it were best for you; and when he puts the bitter element into it, it is the prescription of the Good Physician,—it is the tempering of the cup with what is expedient for

you. I pity from the heart the man who lives in perpetual sunshine. We cannot endure it; we need shadow; and if it do not come, we shall soon suffer the painful effects of its absence. If, then, suffering be a part of the profession of Christ, let us not be ashamed of it; but if any man suffer, as says St. Peter, let him suffer as a Christian.

Another reason why some are ashamed of the Gospel is, that those who are consistent enough to stand by its principles, and assert its claims, always and everywhere, are sure to be charged with bigotry. One of the most common and telling attacks that mere worldly men make upon a man who has the honesty to do what he has the grace to believe is, "You are a bigot. You want liberality and enlightenment." There is a difference between liberality and latitudinarianism. Liberality is to forgive a difference in details, but never to forget that principle is one and the same always and everywhere, and cannot be sacrificed or compromised. It is liberality when you surrender the largest shell of prejudice, if it will conciliate a brother; but it would be latitudinarianism if you were to compromise the least vital seed of eternal truth, if it were to conciliate all mankind. It is bigotry, I admit, to assert, for instance, that you can only be saved in the English or the Scottish Church. It is bigotry to assert, that you cannot pray without a liturgy, or that you cannot pray with one. It is bigotry to say, that you must believe in episcopacy or in presbytery; but it is not bigotry to assert that there is but one name under heaven given among men whereby we can be

saved, the name of Jesus. It is not bigotry to assert, that the blood of Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. Compromise here is being ashamed of Christ and the gospel of his salvation.

Another cause why some persons are ashamed, not only of vital religion, but of Christianity itself, is — what have been attacked by the sceptic in every age — the crimes that have been perpetrated, and the wickedness that has been done in the injured name of Christianity. Open the pages of the sceptic, and he will remind you of the Inquisition, and of the persecutions that were carried on by professing Christians from the 10th to the 15th century in Piedmont, and in the valleys of the Cottian Alps. All this, they say, was done by men who professed Christianity. It was done by men who seized Christianity as a consecration for deeds that originated from beneath, and dishonored God and the cause they espoused. For these things be not ashamed of Christ, but Antichrist; be not ashamed of Christianity, but of the apostasy. Do not condemn the holy, merciful, beautiful, and true religion, because it has been seized by men inspired by Satan, and made before the world to consecrate a cause it reprobates, repudiates, and has no sympathy with at all. The light of the noonday sun has been used to guide the murderer to his victim; but you do not blame the sun in the firmament for that. The pale light of the chaste moon has been used to guide the depraved to the gratification of their appetites, but you do not blame the moon for that. Blame not religion, but man; and blame not the Bible, but the perversion,

abuse, and corruption of it. Be not ashamed of this glorious tree, because the spider has woven its web amongst its twigs, and the caterpillar has wasted its bright leaves by its presence; but assert the majesty and Divine origin of the truth; for it is from God, and it tends to him, and is responsible only for whatsoever things are pure, and just, and lovely, and of good report.

But it will be said, even Protestants have persecuted. That is most true; but it was not their Protestantism that made them do so, but their own internal depravity, and nothing else. It is quite true that in England and Scotland, and on the continent of Europe, most of the Reformers held the idea that a man ought to be punished personally for his religious and solemn convictions; but when they did so, we ask, where did they learn these lessons? It was in the school of Rome; and my amazement is, not that they had these stains of the apostasy out of which they came clinging to them, but that they had so few. God used the Reformers, not because they were sinless, but in spite of their sins; and, at all events, if God would not have used such men as Knox, and Luther, and Cranmer, and Ridley, to reform the Church, I do not think he ever could have used such men as the Hildebrands, the Borgias, and Leo X. to perpetuate the Church. The fact is, persecution is more or less indigenous to the human heart; but the real question is, in which rule of faith is it incorporated? In the Bible it is repudiated. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants; and it tells us emphatically

that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty: and if the fagots are to blaze, let them be kindled by the foes, not by the friends of Jesus. If the sword is to be unsheathed in the cause of religion, let it not be by the friends, but by the foes of the Gospel of Christ.

Again, it has been made a ground of being ashamed of the Gospel, because loud Christian professors have very often acted most unworthily of it. But, my dear friends, honesty is not to be blamed, because thieves introduce themselves to your warehouses as honest men; and truth is not the worse, because a liar solemnly asserts that he is governed by it, when he is seeking only to compass his own objects; and Christianity is not to be renounced, because a loud professor, who never felt its power, falls, like a star from its orbit, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. But let me notice, now, some respects in which true Christians may practically, though not, probably, intentionally, be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. One way in which this sin is perpetrated, or at least proximately so, is silence when Christ's name is dishonored, or Christ's kingdom denounced or assailed. It is not enough, my dear friends, that you should say nothing against Christ. You are ashamed of the Gospel if, on the proper occasion, in the proper place, and in the proper spirit, you do not speak for him, when all speak against him, and avow your adhesion to his cause, when great and powerful men denounce it. What would you say of that soldier who would hear patiently his Queen calumniated,

and conceal the symbols and the uniform that show he is in her service? What would you say of that patriot who should hear his native land caricatured and reproached, and be silent as he listened? and what respect would you have for that parent who would hear his hearth and his fireside spoken of in language of hatred and contempt, and not breathe one whisper of remonstrance? and what can you say of that Christian who, in the railway carriage, the steamboat, or in the houses of Parliament, can hear Christ's cause derided or despised, and not stand up, and say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ?" I do not believe that a man is only to be a Christian in the church, and only a tradesman in the shop; that a man is to be a Christian personally, but that the instant he enters the Parliament, he is to leave his Christianity, like his cloak, behind him. It seems to me, that wherever a Christian is, there he ought to be the advocate of the ascendancy, not of a sect, or a party, or a crotchet, but of vital and true religion.

Christians seems to me to approach being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, when they forsake the assembling of themselves together. I admit that coming to the house of God is a very equivocal way of showing that we are Christians. Many come regularly to the sanctuary who are not Christians at all. But then, very few absent themselves from it who are Christians; and it seems to me that if coming to the house of prayer be not evidence of Christianity, the forsaking of it is very strong presumptive proof that there is no Christianity at all; and, at all events,

the least that we can do to show that we are not ashamed of the Gospel is to join in the prayers and praises of the sanctuary, and to listen to those lessons that will give us strong motives and sustaining hopes to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Another way of at least seeming to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ is, refusing to come to the Lord's table. I think that a communion table is the place where a Christian by a very special act declares, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." It seems to me, that when a man seats himself there, he declares to the world, "Be ashamed of religion who will, I am persuaded that it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

Another way in which Christians seem to be ashamed of the Gospel is, by cherishing an excess of Christian modesty. They are frightened lest they should express more than they feel, or seem to parade what ought to be the sacred resident of the sanctuary. You fear lest you should embarrass rather than aid Christ's cause by taking a part in it. Now, it does seem to me that every man who has an atom of power is solemnly bound, if he would not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, to consecrate that power to his glory. I believe, that very many are almost blanks in the world, though they escape being blots, because they will not take the opportunity of being blessings to the world. Often and again, words of comfort that would cheer a sad heart mount to your lips, but from excessive reserve they are arrested before they are expressed. Many a time

deeds of beneficence that would make the widow's heart sing for joy are not done by you, lest you should seem to be too forward, or to assume a place that does not belong to you. My dear friends, while we do not parade our religion, while we do not make a display of our principles, we ought not to be silent when they are assailed, or to connive when they are sacrificed, but everywhere and always not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

The very awful language that will be pronounced upon those who are ashamed of him is, that he will be ashamed of them when the glory and the kingdom are visibly his, because they have been ashamed of him when reproach and contumely were his only inheritance. He says himself, "Whoso shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven; but whoso shall deny me, him will I deny before my Father in heaven." And, at that day, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, there will be but two classes, — they that have not been ashamed of him, and they who have. A day comes when all the outer distinctions of this life shall be levelled, and only two grand distinctions shall last and live for ever. On whose side are we? Be Christians, and you will not be ashamed of saying so; seek your heart to be renewed; and lip, and hand, and foot, will all give token that it is so. What we need is a deeper and richer inspiration of God's grace in the heart, and then never and nowhere shall we be ashamed of what is our greatest ornament and glory, — Christ, and him crucified.

NOTE. — [27-30.] Matt. xvi. 13-20; Luke ix. 18-21. With the exception of the introduction in Luke, which describes the Lord to have been alone, praying, and joined by his disciples, and the omission of the praise of, and promise to Peter, by both Mark and Luke, the three are in exact accordance. On this latter omission no stress must, therefore, be laid as to the character of Mark's Gospel, as has been done. (Theophylact, cited by De Wette.) — *Alford*.

CHAPTER IX.

TRANSFIGURATION — MOSES AND ELIJAH — PETER'S PROPOSAL — PROMISE OF ELIJAH'S COMING — DEMONIAK CURED — PRAYER, FASTING, AND FAITH — INTERPRETATION — ENDLESS MISERY — AFFLICTION.

It will not be necessary that I should dwell very long in my expository remarks on the transfiguration, recorded in this chapter, since the very same historical event came before us, and was the subject of protracted exposition, in a chapter of the previous Gospel according to St. Matthew.¹

Our Lord says, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power," that is, a gleam of that kingdom, a vision of that descending glory, a sight of its splendor and magnificence, as it were, in the dawn, that shall convince them of the greatness and glory of the noonday, and be to them an earnest of their blessed entrance into that kingdom, when this dispensation shall be merged in it. We read, that in fulfilment of this promise, and after six days, James, and Peter, and John, were taken with him into a high mountain, and insulated from the din, uproar, and confusion of

¹ See "Sabbath Evening Readings on St. Matthew's Gospel."

this world, lonely or apart, with none to disturb, intrude, or interfere, and He was there, in the language of the passage, "transfigured," or invested with a portion of his shining raiment, or appeared in that splendor, magnificence, and glory in which he will appear when He cometh in the clouds with power and great glory, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him shall mourn because of him. In this vision of the millennial kingdom in brief, in this epitome, or, to use a common expression, this birdseye view of the kingdom that is to be, it is said that "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them." So will his people be when it shall be asked, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

We read also, that upon this Mount of Transfiguration there appeared Moses, the representative of the Law, and Elijah, the representative of the Prophets, talking with Jesus, and not only talking with him, but Moses evidently saying, "This is the Prophet of whom I spake;" and Elijah, "This is the Messiah of whom I prophesied." There these two were not sharers in his glory, but witnesses to him as the Lamb of God, the King of Zion, the only Saviour of sinners.

Peter, ever first to speak, ever first to flee; his rashness sometimes a virtue, sometimes a fault,—probably and strictly viewed constitutionally neither,—said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here,"

—no doubt of that; “and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,” evidently desiring to pay to Christ the primary, but to Elijah and Moses a secondary honor; and he evidently thought that now the kingdom of glory had dawned, and that no kingdom of pilgrimage and trial had to be gone through. Peter was like most of us, — he would willingly build the tabernacle upon Tabor, forgetting that it could not be built there till the great suffering on Calvary was finished. We would all anticipate the millennium; we would snatch the crown without the cross; we would forestall God’s time, and take premature possession of the approaching glory, instead of placing ourselves in God’s hand, and drinking first of the bitter cup, that we may drink it sweet and full in our Father’s kingdom. The only explanation of Peter’s rash expression is, that he wist not what to say. He was so overwhelmed by the splendor of the scene, that he lost his self-possession; and what he said was not what he maturely thought, but what came uppermost and found expression, before, perhaps, he was able to control, modify, or repress it.

Then we read that a cloud came, and overshadowed them; and a voice came from the cloud, evidently rebuking Peter by implication, “This is my beloved Son; hear him,” — not Moses, nor Elijah; that is, turn away from all reverence, worship, or homage, even to the most exalted of created intelligences, and concentrate all your homage and adoration upon Him who alone is entitled to it, the Lamb of God, the beloved Son, the only Saviour. “And

suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save "Him who was first and last, and all and in all, "Jesus only."

We then read, that when he came down from the mountain, he charged them to tell no man—for reasons that he himself knew—probably because the time and place of telling these tidings were not yet come.

They did not understand what He meant by his rising from the dead; and this fact, that the apostles were so unenlightened, that they did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead, makes them the more competent witnesses of that fact. They asked him, however, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" The scribes said it because the prophets had predicted it. "Jesus answered, and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things." The scribes said this, not from tradition, but from Scripture; and he says, "It is perfectly true that Elijah will first come, and restore all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him." Now, this seems at first to imply that John the Baptist was Elijah; but you will find from very careful inquiry that he was not so. He came, in the language of another Gospel, in the spirit of Elijah, and he received the treatment that was predicted; but he was not Elijah. The plain evidence of this is, that when they asked John, "Art thou that prophet?" he answered, "No." Again, "Art thou

Elijah?" and he answered, "No." Of course John knew what he was; and his answering, "I am not Elijah," is plain evidence that he was not. But, you say, what then is the meaning of the expression, "Elias is indeed come," which, undoubtedly, refers to John the Baptist? I answer, it is explained by the parallel passage, which tells us that John came in the spirit of Elijah. He came to herald Christ to suffer, just as Elijah will come to herald Christ to reign. Our Lord says, that Elijah "will restore all things;" but John the Baptist restored nothing.

I believe that before the second personal advent of our blessed Lord in glory and majesty, Elijah will literally come and restore all things. There is nothing strange in supposing, that as John the Baptist came to precede Christ to suffer, so Elijah will come to precede Christ to reign in glory. That Elijah lives, is plain from the fact that he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration; and that he will come to restore all things, is not only the promise of our blessed Lord, but the reiterated prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures. In the book of the prophet Malachi, this is evidently alluded to, when he says, at the 5th verse of the 4th chapter, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord;" not before Christ's day of suffering, but before the day that will burn as an oven, and the day when the heavens shall be on fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. And what shall he do? He shall turn the heart of the fathers—that is, the Jews—to the children—that is, the Gentiles; and Jew and Gentile, knit together

in the bonds of a new communion, shall constitute one holy and happy ransomed family. It is utterly impossible to explain the various passages that relate to the coming of Elijah on any other supposition than this, that before the last day that looms in the distant horizon, and comes nearer every day that we live, and is almost at our doors, Elijah will come, restore all things, and, according to the promise, turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; and then shall be seen the Son of Man, preceded by his sign, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

In this ninth chapter we find a miracle wrought by our blessed Lord, in the cure of one who was possessed by a demon, and not the victim merely of a painful disease. It is impossible to conclude that the son of this father was simply an invalid, from the language that Jesus employs. When he cures him, he does not touch him, as he did in cases of disease, but Jesus speaks to the spirit that was within him — to the demon that had taken possession of him — and says, “I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” Now, if language has any meaning, that implies that there was a personality in the soul of this man totally distinct from his own; that there was an occupant of his soul, and that he was the victim of a despotism within him; and, therefore, Jesus spoke to the demon, and said, “Come out of him.” I do not think there is such a thing, or has been such a thing, as demoniacal possession for the last 1800 years. It seems as if Satan had always tried to outmanœuvre God by mimicking the steps

He has taken in his march to ultimate victory. When God spake by his prophets, Satan had his prophets too. When Jesus was incarnate in the flesh, the devil took possession of human bosoms and human souls, and became to that extent incarnate also. Now, since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit saves by acting directly upon the human mind; Satan, in mimiery of God's work, corrupts by acting on the human mind also. Thus, wherever the true coin appears, the forged one is seen also. Wherever the true sovereignty is felt, the usurpation is seen also. Satan is always trying, and sometimes with success, to bruise the Saviour's heel, but with the deep consciousness that his own head will be bruised, and his kingdom utterly overthrown.

The apostles asked Jesus why they could not cast the demon out; and he says, "This kind," not as if he spoke of a special kind, but demoniacal possession, "can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting;" that is, prayer is the instrument. But fasting does not mean abstaining from food merely; it denotes insulation from the world, separation from its vanities, its duties, its pleasures and enjoyments, and the occupation of the whole heart with the things that belong to our eternal peace. And Jesus has been pleased to show throughout the whole of the Gospel, that the greatest effects are always to be achieved by the greatest faith. Why he has made faith necessary to reward or pardon, it is not for us to ascertain; it is enough that it is his arrangement, and that he does it wisely and well.

We then read of the conduct of the apostles, who seeing one casting out demons in Christ's name, were so unenlightened, and so actuated by a sectarian spirit, that they forbid him because he followed not them. This is the dissenter saying, "I do not think the churchman can do any good, because he is a churchman;" and the churchman saying, "I do not think the dissenter can do any good, because he is a dissenter,—because such a one follows not with us, pronounces not our shibboleth, worships not in our form, we think he can do no good; and instead of letting him do what he is trying to do, casting out wickedness, and prejudice, and passion, in the name of Jesus, let us persecute him in any ancient possible canonical way. We do not care what good he does, for we do not get the credit of it." How early do we see this proscriptive, exclusive, and bigoted spirit manifest itself among the apostles themselves! Do not blame the Church of Rome, as having a monopoly of bigotry, persecution, and malignant feeling towards those whom she calls heretics. The fact is, every unconverted man would be a pope, if he could; and every collection of unconverted men would be a persecuting synod, if they had only power to be so. It is human nature that seeks to put down what does not glorify itself; and the difference between it and the Church of Rome is, that human nature is there consecrated and canonized, and that which we reprobate in the light of the Gospel is recognized as part and parcel of Christian duty.

We then read that our Lord rebuked those who

would not resign a favorite indulgence in order to escape permanent spiritual injury. He says that whosoever, whatever be his name, or whatever be the amount of his light, gives even the least that he has—a cup of cold water—in Christ's name, believing on him, to one who belongs to Christ, he shall not lose his reward. What encouragement is this to give, and to feel the blessedness of him who delights in giving! for it is more blessed to give than to receive. And how delightful is it to know that those who have not much to give, but who give what they can really spare for Christ's sake—are accepted of him! But are we to understand those passages literally in this chapter, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off?" No, certainly not. This would be just that sort of interpretation which leads people to find in the 3d chapter of John baptismal regeneration, and in the 6th chapter of John transubstantiation. We are evidently to interpret such passages as these in the spirit in which they were spoken, and in the obvious light in which they were written. "Labor not for the bread that perisheth," does not mean that we are not to labor for our daily bread: on the contrary, we are taught that he who will not work, neither should he eat; but it teaches us that we are to labor rather and more earnestly for the enduring bread than for the bread that perisheth. So here, if an object, dear as a right eye and useful as a righthand, stand between you and your progress to heaven and your complete surrender to Christ Jesus, that object, however dear, and the sacrifice of it, however painful, you are to part with,

renounce, and resign, counting all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord.

As to the expressions that are here repeated, "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," I do not think that these necessarily prove a material and literal description of the sufferings of the lost. There is no literal worm that gnaws; and I do not discover from the Bible that there is a literal fire that burns; but these symbols are employed by the Holy Spirit to denote the intense wretchedness of that state wherein God has forgotten to be gracious. But nobody, I think, on reading these expressions, can doubt that the misery of the lost is perpetual and ever enduring. I think that those people called Universalists, instead of preaching down hell, would do much better if they would preach up Christ and heaven. If you show that whatever be the intensity of the misery of the lost, there is no reason why one sinner on earth should perish, you do better than by encouraging them in the path of ruin to plunge into the place of misery, in the wretched and vain anticipation that hell is only a sort of purgatory that has a happy and prosperous end. As far as I can gather from the whole word of God, it is a place of perpetual sorrow. If man cannot be saved now, surely he cannot be saved then.

You ask, what is meant by that expression, "Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." I do not think that that passage has the least reference whatever to the

state of the lost. Our Lord is there alluding rather to the expressions, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out:" for, he says, "every one shall be salted with fire." Fire is used in Scripture to denote suffering, persecution, trial, or distress of any kind. Salt is used in Scripture to denote permanence, or perpetuity. Salt was put upon the sacrifices: sacrificial language is employed; and the passage means that every one shall go through suffering in this present world; every one shall be salted, or sprinkled—for that is the meaning of it—with affliction. If that affliction, like the fire, purify the soul it saturates and touches, happy will it be; but if that affliction fail to have this its legitimate and just effect, then "the salt has lost its saltness," and there is nothing wherewith you can be seasoned. It means, translated from the allusive language of Levi into the simple language of the Gospel, "Through much tribulation of some sort—cares within, or losses without—every one must enter into the kingdom of heaven." If these afflictions have a purifying effect, then you will find that "though no tribulation for the present seemeth joyous, yet it worketh out the peaceable fruits of righteousness." But if these afflictions fail to have a purifying effect, then they will have the opposite; the salt will have lost its savor—you have lost the effect of God's dispensations—and you will be hardened for everlasting misery, not sanctified and prepared for eternal joy.

NOTE. — The Lord answers it, by telling them that it is even so; and returns the question by another: And how it is (also) written of the Son of Man, that he, &c. ? Then comes the conclusion in verse 13, with *ἀλλὰ λέγω ὑμῖν*, stating that Elias has come, and leaving it therefore to be inferred that the sufferings of the Son of Man were close at hand. Notice how the *γέγ. ἐπ' αὐτὸν* binds both together. Just as the first coming of the Son of Man is to suffer and to die, so has the first coming of Elias been as it was written of him; but there is a future coming of Elias, *ἀποκαθιστάνειν πάντα*, and of the Son of Man in his glory.

[38.] The connection of this remark with what goes before is — If the receiving any one, even a little child, in thy name, be receiving thee, were we doing right when we forbid one who used thy name, but did not follow us? “Observent hoc,” says Bengel, “qui charismata alligant successioni canonicæ.” This man actually did what the very apostles themselves were specially appointed to do; and the Lord, so far from prohibiting, encourages him. See Numbers xi. 26–29.

[39.] See 1 Cor. xii. 3. The very success of the miracle will awe him, and prevent him from scorn or lightly speaking. We must beware of supposing that the application of this saying is to be confined to the working of a miracle. Verse 40 shows that it is general, — a weighty maxim of Christian toleration and charity, and a caution to men how they presume to limit the work of the Spirit of God to any sect, or succession, or outward form of Church. See Phil. i. 16–18.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER X.

CROWDS OF HEARERS — PHARISEES AND DIVORCE — GLORY OF
THE BIBLE — GOD SUFFERS EVIL — REASONS WHY HE DOES SO
— CHILDREN BROUGHT TO JESUS — HEAVEN FULL OF — THEIR
CHARACTER — BAPTISM — THE YOUNG INQUIRER — RICHES —
— PROVERB — PROMISE.

WE find here, as on former occasions, that great crowds followed the Redeemer, anxious to hear the wonderful words that proceeded from his mouth; and on this occasion, as on previous ones, he showed that wherever there was an audience willing to hear, there was a Teacher willing to speak to them the words of everlasting life. But amongst those who followed him, were some who came not to hear what would do them good, but to suggest what possibly might ensnare and injure him. The Pharisees, with that carping and cavilling disposition which they show whenever they make their appearance in the sacred narrative, put to him this question, — “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?” Not that they really wished for information, but that they thought they might get him to make some remark upon that subject that would involve him in difficulty with the ruling powers, or give them the opportunity of exciting the populace against him.

The evidence streams from their whole conduct, that intense enmity to Jesus was their absorbing and actuating motive. Mark how our Lord replies: "What did Moses command you?" See what honor he everywhere sets upon the Scriptures! A question is asked, and he answers it, not from the depths of his own inexhaustible wisdom, as he might have done, but by a simple reference to God's holy Word. I do not know a greater proof of the glory of the Scripture than this, that the Author of the Scriptures thus appeals to them for the solution of every difficulty.

The Pharisees, who could quote Scripture too, quoted one part of it, where it appeared that Moses suffered them to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. If then, why not now? they asked. In reply, our Lord unfolds a very governing principle, when he says, "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." This shows us that God suffers practices to exist in different stages of the history of the world, which he does not approve, but which he is pleased to tolerate for a time, and eventually to overrule for great, good, and beneficent purposes. How far we can reconcile this with the government of God, it is not for us to show very clearly; but that it is consistent with that government we are sure, because he himself has distinctly told us so. If it should be said that this seems strange, I answer, Why does God suffer many other things to exist in the world, and not put an end to them at once? Why does he suffer sin or oppression to continue and increase among mankind?

Why does he allow ten thousand sources of evil that he might silence and stop for ever? The answer is, He suffers it, partly because he will not coerce by force those whose judgments he will carry by conviction; and partly because this is a mixed dispensation, in which sin and holiness, error and truth, are struggling for supremacy; and if all that happens in it we cannot now reconcile, we rejoice to believe that what we know not, and cannot explain now, we shall know, and be able to explain hereafter. However, here was a positive practice permitted, not because applauded, but because the infancy of the race required that it should be tolerated. And the very same explanation applies to an institution that unquestionably existed in the days of the apostles — slavery. God tolerated that amongst the Jews; and the apostles clearly tolerated it as an existing institution, while they did not applaud it. The hardness of the human heart required it to be suffered then; but no one who reads and understands the Bible will be able to deny that the whole spirit of Christianity is opposed to the existence of slavery. The history of that institution is written in tears and blood; and in proportion as this blessed religion of ours gains supremacy in the hearts of mankind, in the same proportion will that and all other institutions and relationships not sanctioned in the Bible be dissolved, and disappear from the face of the whole earth.

After this reply of our Lord to the Pharisees on the subject of marriage, and his reference to the primeval institution, some of the mothers in the midst

of Jerusalem, and on the further side of the Jordan, brought to him children, that he might touch them; but the disciples, far less kind and tender than the Great Master, forbad the mothers, and tried to keep them away from Jesus. They were not the advocates of early Christian education; they thought the young too contemptible for so great and blessed a Teacher, and they thought it would be better to let them grow to maturity, and then to decide for themselves. If children were born in innocence, you might safely trust them to such an experiment; but the fact is, that if left to themselves, they have within them the instinctive tendency to depart from God, and it is lamentably certain that they will not only grow up without God, but hostile to all that bears his image, and is obedient to his will. Jesus, therefore, rebuked the disciples, and “was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me” — it is the translation of the Greek word that means “an infant” — “Suffer the little infants to come unto me, and forbid them not,” — it is the strongest possible language — “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” This language is sometimes misconstrued. Some persons think it is an expression exactly parallel to that employed in a previous passage, where Jesus set a child in the midst of them, and said that unless they became as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. It has been thought that “of such is the kingdom of heaven,” means, that of persons of a childlike disposition is the kingdom of heaven; but it really means, of such very children is the kingdom

of heaven chiefly made up: and I feel that this unfolds the precious thought, that the majority of the inhabitants of heaven are glorified infants. We know, as matter of fact, that half the human race die in infancy; and what an awful thought would it be, were we persuaded that this half is lost! I am amazed that any one should entertain so uncongenial a notion, or should have a moment's comfort in doing so. Were Scripture silent, we might be sad; but it is not so. It seems to me therein revealed, that all infants dying before years of responsibility,—and half the human race die in that condition,—whether their fathers be Jews or Mahometans, Christians or heathens, and whether they be baptized or unbaptized, without exception, are admitted into everlasting joy, and are now in the presence of God. Of course I cannot prove it now, because space will not permit me; but I think it can be demonstrated from the sacred page, that infants dying before years of responsibility are admitted into glory. If, therefore, you join with that the other fact, that increasing portions of the adult population of every age are believers, and that one day all will be righteous, you can see that a majority of the human family will ultimately be saved, and that the kingdom of heaven, when it shall be unfolded in all its majesty and glory, will contain, not a handful, but a great multitude that no man can number.

He adds the instruction, "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." This indicates, first, that children enter into the kingdom of heaven; and, secondly,

that in the case of adults there is required childlike character as a prerequisite to entry into the kingdom of heaven. Now, what is that character? It is teachable, confiding, trustful. Hold out an orange to an infant, and it will take it at once; it never inquires, "I wonder whether my parent intends to give it me?" The fact that the orange is offered is to it the proof that the orange is to be received. And so, instead of quibbling, carping, and cavilling about "I wonder whether I am one of the elect?" you ought, childlike, to feel that what God offers he means to give, and that you honor him more by saying "Yea, Lord, I believe," than by thinking that this is too good for you. Sermons should be childlike, just as our trust should be. But there is a distinction that preacher and people would do well to remember. It is possible to have a childlike disposition, and to preach childlike sermons, without having a childish disposition, or preaching childish sermons. A childlike sermon is compatible with the highest intellect; a childish sermon is only evidence of want of study or want of mind.

He then "took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Now, these babes were capable of a blessing: is it a very violent inference to draw, that babes may be brought to Jesus in baptism? You say very justly that a babe cannot exercise faith. That is quite true; but if a babe can be saved, why may not a babe be baptized? If a babe be fit for heaven through the blood of Christ, why may it not be united to the outward and visible Church by the sacrament of baptism? It seems to

me that we should not inquire so much whether we ought, as whether we may, bring our child to Christ in baptism? The privilege is so precious, that the inquiry should be, "May I?" and not, "Ought I?" I am not denying the propriety of adult baptism. If a man has not been baptized, and comes to believe the Gospel, he ought to be baptized. Therefore, I assert that our Baptist brethren are perfectly right in baptizing adults; but I hold that we, too, are perfectly right in baptizing infants; and as we do not object to their practice in baptizing adults, I do not think they are warranted in objecting to our practice in baptizing infants. True, some men say, baptism is regeneration; but we do not think it—this is disproved by all history. If all the baptized were regenerated, there would be no tares in the field,—all would be wheat. I know also that some parents have the erroneous idea that if their child die unbaptized, it cannot be saved. Were I asked to baptize a child about to die, my answer would be, "It may be comfort to you; it is privilege for the child; and I will come and do so: but let me explain to you that baptism always presupposes that the child is in health, and going to live." Baptism is for the Church militant, and not for the Church in glory. If the child is going to heaven, it has the baptism that the Good and Great Father only can give, and needs not the baptism which belongs to time.

After this, a young man came to Jesus, to whose history I referred when reading the Gospel of St. Matthew. He was rich, but yet he felt the want of something still, and asked, "Good Master, what shall

I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus objected to his words. You ask, Why did Jesus object to the epithet "good?" I answer, the young man had an idea, as the subsequent sketches show, that such goodness as we can attain was a sufficient title to heaven; and Jesus, in order to correct his idea of goodness, said, "Why do you call me good? You know that that word is an absolute word; it denotes absolute perfection. You need to have your idea of it corrected before you can find your way to heaven. There is none good but one, that is, God. If, therefore, I be not God, the epithet 'good' does not belong to me. If I be God," as he has explained he was elsewhere, "then I am good. It is an absolute word, not to be used in that popular and indefinite sense in which it is employed in the currency of every-day speech." Jesus proceeded to test him: "Thou knowest the commandments," quoting the last six; and the young man said, "All these have I observed from my youth." I have no doubt that he had observed them in their letter, but he did not see that each law sent its jurisdiction into the depths of the heart, and charged a thought, a desire, an appetite, with infraction of a holy and a righteous law.

Then Jesus put the test to him, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And he went away grieved, for the reason that he had great possessions.

Then Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples, when they heard this, were astonished at his words; and then Jesus explained them, "How

hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" Now, let us understand that there is no more sin in having 10,000*l.* a year than in having 100*l.* a year. There is no more sin in being rich than there is virtue in being poor. It is the amount of trust in, and dependence upon what we have, that constitutes much of the danger and all the guilt of what is called being rich. The man who has a small income may have his heart as much taken up with it as the man who has an income of many thousands a year. It is not the amount we have, but the amount of trust that we lay upon it, that makes the deceitfulness of wealth. At the same time it must be admitted, that when one has all that this world can give, there is much temptation to forget God, to say, "This is my rest," and never to think about a better. It is affliction, loss, poverty, want, that empty man of the idols that filled the niches of the temple that is within; and then the emptiness and the desolation which the rich so little feel, make him think of something more satisfying than gold, and of water, of which if a man drink he shall thirst no more.

Jesus adds, by way of illustration, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This is a phrase which has been very much canvassed. There are two Greek words very like each other, — *κάμηλον* and *κάμιλον*, the former being the one used here, and meaning a camel; the latter being a cable rope. Some have thought that the *η* should give way to the *ι*; and then the text would be, "It is easier for a

cable rope to go through the eye of a needle:" but it is fair to add that we have no ancient Greek manuscript with this reading, or ancient quotation of it in this shape. It may have been a proverbial expression, — the eye of a needle, and a camel, being the smallest and largest objects with which the Jews were familiar. Some have said that the idea is drawn from a gorge between the mountains somewhere in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, through which camels were accustomed to pass upon their knees with great difficulty.

NOTE. — [30.] Here Luke's account is important. To it and Luke we owe *vñv èν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ*, without which the promise might be understood of a future life only, and to it alone we owe the particularizing of the returns made, and the words *μετὰ δωγμῶν*, which light up the whole passage, and show that it is the inheritance of the earth in the higher sense by the meek which is spoken of, (see 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.) Observe, fathers and mothers: nature gives us only one of each, but love many. We do not read wives, because Christ does not promise aught which can point to sensual enjoyment, and because of that mystic relation to the soul united to him in which he himself stands. Here follows in Matthew the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER XI.

LITERAL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY—THE CHILDREN'S SHOUT—
THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE—CURSE ON THE TREE A LESSON TO
THE JEWS—DESECRATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD—JESUS
REBUKES IT—JOHN KNOX—PRAYER—CAPTIOUS QUESTIONS.

IN the commencement of the chapter I have read we have the fulfilment, in historical fact, of an ancient and very minute prophecy, the literal fulfilment of which one would scarcely have expected. It is predicted, as you are aware, in Zechariah ix. 9, "Thy king cometh unto thee, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." There is not the least doubt that the prediction relates to the Messiah; but if we had not read the historical fulfilment of it, we should, according to a very prevalent and popular way of interpreting prophecy, have put what is called a figurative interpretation upon it, and said, "This cannot mean that the Messiah shall come literally riding upon an ass into Jerusalem, but it must mean that he will come in a very lowly and unpretending state, without pomp or majesty, or the signs and shine of imperial splendor, or any thing to indicate the presence of the King of kings." But you see the prophecy is *verbatim* fulfilled; and this is an earnest of the

fulfilment of the rest of the prophecies of the word of God. I do not think it is fair to say, that some predictions shall be figuratively fulfilled, because we cannot understand them; for surely the God whose truth inspired the prophecy is omnipotent, and has power, when, where, and how he pleases, to carry out prophecy into historical and full fulfilment. Therefore, I believe that all those predictions contained in ancient prophecy about Jerusalem being exalted on the top of the mountains, and becoming the great metropolis of a regenerated world, and the Jewish Church taking the precedence of all others; and about Christ being personally present there, and about the dead in Christ rising when he comes, however difficult it may seem to us, will be literally and exactly fulfilled. And I cannot see where one's foot is to stand, if we give up the literal interpretation of Scripture, except where such literal interpretation would, if carried out, involve us in absurdity; but as no such absurdity can be involved in these, we accept them literally, and believe that heaven and earth may pass away, but that one jot or tittle—a dot—shall not pass away till all these be completely fulfilled.

After this we read that certain persons, and in the parallel Gospel it is said the children, shouted, as Jesus came into the midst of them, evidently under some inspiration from on high, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" They recognized him here as the promised Messiah; they sang his praise, however lowly he seemed to be in this world; and veiled under that face, which

was more marred than any man's, and concealed under that lowly and unpretending aspect, they saw with the eye of faith, which pierced the drapery and looked within the veil, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And it is said in the parallel Gospel that on this occasion there was fulfilled that passage, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise," or "ordained strength." There is something interesting in the fact that scribes, priests, doctors, rabbis, tried to betray him, but that babes and ragged boys upon the streets shouted "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" It may be that more may enter into heaven from our poor schools, for which I am pleading this day, than from noble halls and imperial palaces. It is not earthly pomp that is the test of spiritual character—nay, the very reverse, for not many noble, not many great, are called. It is out of the lower strata of the earth that the most precious diamonds are dug; it is from the sunken and degraded masses of society that Jesus is selecting and polishing the brightest gems for his imperial diadem. While priests and rabbis may say, "Away with him! away with him!" there will be found many in our Sunday schools, and our ragged schools, who have tasted of the blessings of the cross, who shout now, and who will shout yet more joyously hereafter, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

A fig-tree was seen by Jesus, having leaves, and "he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon;

and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet." It has been said by some, that the fruit precedes the appearance of the leaves upon the fig-tree, and that it was reasonable to expect figs, but the time of the figs appearing, though there were leaves upon the tree, was not yet come. Just as you see in January the trees prematurely shooting forth buds and leaves, soon again to be nipped, so this fig-tree had prematurely leaves upon it, which were a profession that they embosomed fruit in the midst of them.

When Jesus came, and saw leaves and no fruit, it is said he pronounced an anathema upon it, — "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever." Now some have very much quarrelled with this miracle. They have said that here the great and blessed Master seems to indicate temper, as if disappointment at not finding fruit made him hurriedly and intemperately pronounce a malediction on the tree. But there is no evidence of any thing in this act that was either violent, unnatural, or cruel. That Jesus was angry on many an occasion, I have not the least doubt; but anger is not a sin. It is no more sinful to be angry than it is to be hungry. The apostle says, "Be ye angry, and sin not;" and very often a hot temper is the atmosphere around the warmest and most generous heart. Anger is only sin when it degenerates, festers, or corrupts into malignant hate; and hence the importance of that maxim, as a preventive of anger swelling into revenge, "Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath." But there is no evidence here of that; and it is a most interesting fact,

that ever as living beings came to Jesus, the subjects of misfortune, he healed them; and that the only instance in which he pronounced a malediction was not upon a living man, but upon a dead and insensible tree. And it was right that, whilst there was so much beneficence, love, and mercy, it should be seen that what is God's strange work is not unknown or impossible to him, — the work of righteous retribution.

But if the cursing of this tree had been a mere incidental act without a meaning, we should have been less able to defend it; but the fact is, the fig-tree was the great type of the Jews: it is constantly used as such; and we are told that one of the signs of Christ's near approach will be the budding of the fig-tree, that is, the Jews beginning to awake to a sense of their long lost privileges, and the hope of their coming glory. Thus, our Lord's blasting the fig-tree, because it had the leaves of profession, whilst it was destitute of the fruits of practice, was a most significant act to the Jews who saw it; for it told them that their roots must be dried up, if they do not bring forth in their season those fruits which they were planted to produce, and having cumbered the ground one, two, three years, the fig-tree must be cut down, or wither to the roots, and waste away, or be thrown to the burning. It was not, therefore, an arbitrary act without a relation to other things, but it was an instructive lesson: and just as Jesus took the corn that grew in the field, the flowers by the wayside, the lilies that grew near him, and made these the mirrors of bright truths, so he took the fig-tree,

blasted and withered it, not because it was criminal, for morally it could not be so, but in order to be an instructive and important lesson to man.

When he went into the temple he found the awful desecration that was practised in the midst of it. Jesus did not go into the holy place of the temple. He was not of the order of Levi or Aaron, and therefore he could not be admitted to the sacerdotal place, prerogatives, and functions of the temple; but he went into the outer courts, and these outer courts, instead of being places of retirement and of meditative piety, had become shops in which cattle and doves were sold, and the money of the Romans exchanged for the shekel of the Jews. In fact, he saw a very large and remunerative traffic carried on by avaricious Jews in the house of God, on the occasion of persons coming up to the temple to give their offerings and to present sacrifices: and Jesus seems to have been animated by a strong and indignant feeling, and to have upset the seats of the money-changers, and to have said, "I do it, because my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer." You say, Why did they submit to this? Jesus had no police to back him, no military to stand by him; and there was a crowd of avaricious Jews who could have crushed him at once. The answer is, Because in their own consciences they knew that they were guilty of what was wrong; and everybody knows that conscience makes cowards of criminals. They felt that it was deserved, and they gave way. Every one knows that in the voice of high-toned moral rebuke there is great power: so much so, that

the voice of the humblest man who is right is able to awe a very great multitude who are consciously wrong. Moral integrity is strength; but wherever a man feels he is in the wrong, he shrinks from the rebuke of him who speaks the words of righteousness, soberness, and truth.

I need scarcely repeat what most must have read, — that it was upon this text that John Knox preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Andrews, as very beautifully represented by Wilkie in his celebrated painting, now engraved, in the presence of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of St. Andrews; and it was what he said upon these words that established that blessed Reformation in Scotland, which, with all its faults, — and it has many, — has not admitted any reflux of Romanism; for I do not think that of the 1,500 clergymen of the Church of Scotland there is one Puseyite. You may say that John Knox and the Scottish Reformers accomplished the Reformation very roughly; but the practical effect has been that the nests having been taken away, the rooks have never found their way back again; and perhaps it would have been well if the Reformers of this great land had just taken Knox as a precedent, if not in whole, at least in part, and had swept away more than they had courage to do, — the result would not have been that which we now so much deplore and deprecate. But many people in this country have the idea that John Knox was a coarse Vandal, or a savage Goth, and the last man they would have liked to have touched the Church of England. Now, the fact is, he had the most accomplished education;

he was a first-rate scholar; he was the son of one of the oldest families in the country; and his habits were those of a gentleman, just and refined. Then, you may say, why did he speak as he did to Queen Mary? I answer, he said what was true, whether royalty or democracy listened; and that man is worthy of little respect who would sink the apostle in the fine gentleman. Knox was a gentleman, but Knox was a Christian; and we thank God that he sometimes overstepped the sensitive courtesies of the world in order to vindicate the truths of God's holy word. Let me also state that it is a mistake to say that he was the advocate of pulling down cathedrals. I have preached in some of the most beautiful cathedrals of Scotland, and they are not all in ruins. His maxim was, that what superstition had desecrated, the preaching of God's blessed gospel would consecrate. Instead of pulling down cathedrals, he advocated their maintenance. He pulled down the monasteries and convents; but they ought to have been pulled down much sooner: and it was not Knox who did it, but an indignant population, who would not, as some of our representatives would do, treat convents as lunatic asylums, and put inspectors over them, which is so far good; but he felt that institutions which had absorbed the property, and outraged the morality of the land, ought to be destroyed. And they did wisely; and monks and nuns have found but little footing since in Scotland. And perhaps if Knox's Reformation altogether, with all its faults, had been carried out here, it had not been worse for us in this year 1853. But let us

rejoice to know that the Protestant Church is not only a reformed Church, but a reforming Church; and that what was not done at the Reformation, it is not too late to do now. And we are come into circumstances when every thing must be cast overboard except the everlasting gospel, lest the vessel perish in the terrible storms that are now beating on all sides around it. After this, our Lord addressed the disciples upon the dutifulness of prayer, and the extent of its efficacy in expecting fully whatever we ask earnestly and heartily.

Then the Scribes and Pharisees came to him, and tried to ensnare him. They said, not, "Are these things wrong or right?" but, "By what authority doest thou these things?" Now, just notice what a captious question that was. They dared not say, "The money-changers and the sellers of doves in the temple are doing right." That would have damaged them. They dared not say, "You are doing wrong in thus acting, and in thus rebuking us;" but they said, "By what authority doest thou these things?" Just as many people will say, "We do not deny that you preach the truth; but have you the right succession? do you belong to the right lineage? are you the proper channel? have you the right ecclesiastical genealogy?" Now it seems to me that authority is good, but that truth and duty are greater than authority; and instead of asking, "By what authority art thou doing these things?" it is far better to ask, "Are these things right? Is this truth?" If they be truths, believe them; if they be right deeds, accept them: if they be wrong, reject them.

Jesus saw the captiousness of the question, and answered the fools according to their folly. He said, "The baptism of John," that is, his mission, "was it from heaven, or of men?" Now they ought at once to have replied; but instead of that, they showed their own disingenuousness by pausing and cautiously discussing the answer they were to give; and they said, "If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why did ye reject him? But if we shall say, Of men; then we shall lose our popular influence with the people, who believe John to be a prophet." Their only resource, therefore, was either to tell a lie, or to be silent; and they told a lie—"We cannot tell." But Jesus did not reply, "I cannot tell you," but, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." What a sinful creature is man! How truly does he indicate his need of regeneration!

CHAPTER XI. 24.

PRAYER — ASSURANCE.

ARE we to understand these words — “What things soever ye desire, When ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,” in Mark xi. 24, to bear a strictly literal construction? I cannot conceive that they were intended to bear any other. They are no part of an imaginative poem, but a simple direction for all Christians, always and everywhere. Now, either it is true, or it is false. I do not think it is possible to explain it away. I think the only possible interpretation is that suggested to an honest reader when he opens the Bible, and rests upon the blessed and cheering promise, that whatsoever things we ask in prayer, we are to believe that we receive, and we shall receive them.

But what is prayer? I do not know a more beautiful definition of it than that which was given by the Westminster divines, when they wrote in the Shorter Catechism, “Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.” But is prayer thus with all? Is it not in the case of many

a duty? Is it not found in the case of others to be a penance? Do you not feel that whether you obtain or not is a very great uncertainty? and praying without hope, you cease praying, and retire without expectation. Such prayer is not that to which any thing is promised in God's word. It dishonors God and Christ; it is unworthy of ourselves; it is but a pretence, not living, earnest prayer.

Prayer is certainly represented in Scripture as any thing but a weak or a worthless thing. Elijah prayed for the restoration of one, and it was done, Hezekiah had fifteen years added to his reign; Daniel had an angel sent from heaven to teach him; and the prayers of a church fused the chains of an apostle, and he came forth, and appeared to them a free man, to thank God, and to recognize prayer as the instrument of his deliverance; and wherever our blessed Lord refers to prayer in the Gospels, we find him saying, "Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall obtain." And "the effectual fervent prayer," we are told by an apostle, "of a righteous man availeth much."

But, you say, may we ask temporal things of God? I answer, Unquestionably so; and you may do it with the absolute certainty, that what you ask shall be given — it may not be in the exact way that you expected, or in the way that you would prefer — but it shall be given to you substantially and really, in the way that God in his infinite wisdom and love sees to be best for you.

You say, How do we know that what we ask is agreeable to God's will? I answer, It is our privi-

lege to ask whatsoever things we honestly feel we really need. This is our part. It is God's prerogative to decide what things are good for you, and in what shape and at what time to give them. To grant you what sometimes you ask under the excitement of fear, under the stimulus of pain, or in a fit of passion, would be worse on the part of our heavenly Father than for you to give an infant something that would injure it, because it passionately asks for it. Our first conviction is, that what we need and express in prayer God will give; and our consolation is, that he will give it in the shape, and at the time when it will redound most to the glory of the giver, and the best for the present good and eternal joy of the petitioner.

But, it will be said, is not this statement too bold? Is there not something in it needing to be diluted? I answer, Nothing. If our blessed Lord has expressed himself in such absolute terms as those that I have read, why should we hesitate to put upon them the honest and impartial interpretation which they bear? We are exhorted by an apostle to "come with boldness to the throne of grace." Again, "In Christ we have boldness, and access with confidence." Again, after the apostles had asked our Lord little things and great things day after day, he said, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing: ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." And it is a far greater expression of confidence in God to do what he bids us, than to weigh the comparative freedom that we ought to use. Were the Queen of England to offer you a coronet, or a dis-

tinguished honor, you would show the greatest loyalty by accepting it, as worthy of her to bestow, if it be not worthy of you to accept. And so, when God offers blessings, it is true Christian humility to ask what he has pledged; and to be sure that He who has given up Christ to die for us, will with him also freely give us all things.

You say, perhaps, that you have asked earnestly for blessings, and have never obtained them. If so, I think you cannot have asked earnestly enough, or long enough, or in the right name, or believing that you would receive them; or you may have received them disguised, and soon you may find that you have been entertaining angels unawares. You have asked, perhaps, for a new heart, a divine life, a renewed nature. It will be seen ere long, if the transformation has actually occurred. If you go to a physician, you have to take his time, and his prescription; and will you not deal with the Great Physician as you consent to deal with an earthly one? The very waiting for an answer may be part of the cure. Regeneration is so truly a process, and so little an act; it is so much the work of a lifetime, and so little the production of an instant, that the very waiting, looking, leaning, may be part of the great regimen that God puts you under, in order to obtain this blessed and precious result.

But you say, perhaps, you have in affliction sought from God consolation, and have not been comforted. That may be quite true, but perhaps the sorrow may be part of the treatment that is remedial. We think many things part of the disease that are part of the cure.

Besides, there is another thing in prayer that we must not forget. Our blessed Lord does not say, "Pray to-day, and the answer will come;" but he says, "Pray." It may be good for you to pray this year and next year; it is your business to pray, and to be absolutely certain that you will get what you ask. We are to pray always, and not faint.

But let me now notice how we are to pray. First, it must be in the name of Christ; which means, that God will give on account of Him what he is not ready to give except on account of him. God is as willing to give as you are to ask; but it is his law and for his glory that he will give only in a given way, and that way is the mediation and intercession of Christ Jesus.

Again, when we pray, we are not to pray as criminals, but as children; and we are to ask the blessing, not from a tyrant that reluctantly gives, but we are to ask from our Father, who is ten thousand times more willing and ready to bestow than ever we can be to ask.

And again, when we pray we are to pray in faith. Pray as expressing your inmost feelings, and as asking what God has to bestow, what he will bestow, what he has promised to bestow, and what you have no doubt in the world that he will, in some shape and at some time, assuredly bestow. In other words, pray in faith, nothing doubting.

Do not attach to prayer a saving efficacy, or meritorious virtue. Of that it has none. Do not pray to be seen of men, or as a mere habit, which is too apt to degenerate into a form. Perhaps the

most earnest prayers have been breathed amidst the bustle of a city, or on the field of battle. The prayer that has shot like an arrow, swifter than an angel's wing could clip, and returned loaded with blessings unutterable and full of glory, has been a prayer that was couched in few words, and offered in Christ's name. Many say prayers who never pray at all; and many pray, who do not say prayers. The heart can pray when the lips are dumb; the eye can pray when no ear can hear. God looks not at the attitude; God listens not to the words, but to the aspiration, desire, and petition of the heart; and he gives what he has promised; and if we have not discovered it yet, we shall discover it soon.

James Montgomery the poet has very beautifully defined prayer in these words, which are worthy of our recollection:—

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
 Unutter'd or express'd;
 The motion of a hidden fire
 That trembles in the breast.
 Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
 The falling of a tear;
 The upward glancing of an eye,
 When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
 That infant lips can try;
 Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
 The Majesty on high.
 Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
 The Christian's native air;
 His watchword at the gates of death,
 He enters heaven by prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
 Returning from his ways,
 While angels in their songs rejoice,
 And say, "Behold, he prays!"
 The saints in prayer appear as one,
 In word, in deed, and mind;
 When with the Father and his Son
 Their fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone, —
 The Holy Spirit pleads;
 And Jesus on the eternal throne
 For sinners intercedes.
 O Thou by whom we come to God,
 The Life, the Truth, the Way!
 The path of prayer thyself hast trod:
 Lord, teach us how to pray!

NOTE. — [13.] *ὅτι γὰρ ἦν κ. σ.* This tree was precocious in its being clothed with leaves, and if it had on it winter figs, which remain on from the autumn and ripen early the next season, they would have been ripe at this time. But there were none; it was a barren tree. On the import of this miracle, see notes on Matthew. — *Alford.*

CHAPTER XII.

A PARABLE — PHARISEES SEE ITS DRIFT — THE ERASTIANS AND THE HIGH ECCLESIASTICS — A SNARE — THE ATTACK OF THE SADDUCEES — THE MILLENNIUM AND ITS FEATURES — THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD GLADLY — ONLY TEST OF TRUTH — A WIDOW'S OFFER.

THE first incident recorded in the chapter I have read is an extremely beautiful and instructive parable, the meaning, the tendency, the object, and — if I might say so — the personality of which, it was impossible for the scribes and Pharisees to misunderstand or mistake. He says, "A certain man," — according to the very common usage of eastern countries, and especially of Judea, — "planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country;" there to receive, what he was entitled to, the fruits of his vineyard; and he sent one messenger, then another, and then another, and each in turn was maltreated; some being beaten and others slain; and at last, having a son, he thought that his influence and presence would be so powerful that the husbandmen would, not only reverence him, but send by him the fruits of the vineyard, which were

legitimately his. Our Lord plainly taught them a great lesson, given under the figure of a simple parable, namely, that God's ancient kingdom was Judea, that God's people were the Jews; that he sent to them first patriarchs, next priests, next prophets; and that some they sawed in sunder, as Isaiah, and others they stoned; some they cast out, and some they scorned and despised; and at last, God, whose love was not to be quenched by repulsion, and whose sympathy with those who were perishing was not lessened by this reiterated rejection of his interposition, so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son; but yet the result was that, instead of its receiving him, "He came to his own, and his own received him not;" and so far from human nature being prepared in itself to welcome the holy Messenger from heaven, it had so fallen, had become so debased and deteriorated by sin, that it shouted, and we shouted through it, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

It was impossible for the scribes to misunderstand the application of this, and therefore they construed it as a parable that was levelled at them; "For they knew that he had spoken the parable against them." *Really* it was not against them; but when a person in a congregation hears a sermon that tells especially against his besetting sin, and lays bare that besetting sin in its motive, indulgence, object, and all that is in it, he instantly fancies the sermon is preached at him. Conscience makes him a coward, and misinterprets all that he hears. Though it is a statement of truth applicable to everybody in similar

circumstances, he is so conscious of guilt within, that he construes the sermon as personally levelled at himself, and he gets an excuse for continuing in his sin, by breaking forth into wrath and hatred and antipathy to the preacher, as a personal assailant; just as Herod, who could not get rid of the words of John which rang in the cells of his conscience, got rid of John himself, by commanding his head to be taken off.

Then our Lord says, "Have ye not heard this Scripture; 'The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner?' You will reject the Son of God, you will revile and despise him; but notwithstanding that, God's purpose will be fulfilled, either with man, or without man, or in spite of man; and that stone which you cast away, as a worthless block, will become the headstone of the corner."

We then read, that they sent "unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words." The Herodians were those who knew no authority, law, or ruler superior to Herod. They were, if one might use the expression, the Erastians of the day, who put the State over the Church. The Pharisees were the high-churchmen of the day, who put the Church over the State. Well, these two sects, who carried two principles, each in itself good, to an extravagant pitch, came therefore, and thought that between them they were quite sure of crushing Jesus, and putting to silence thereby this disturber of their peace and unanimity. Now, these two parties were the intense antagonists

of each other. The Herodians heartily hated the Pharisees, because the Pharisees quarrelled with the government of the civil power. The Pharisees as heartily hated the Herodians, because they regarded the government of Rome as superior to the ecclesiastical power. Yet, when they wanted to destroy Jesus, they merged their internal feuds into one current of hostility to the Son of God. The plan which they adopted, which was, no doubt, concocted in a synod, was as follows: "They say unto him, Master,"—this was an empty compliment, and was thorough hypocrisy,—“we know that thou art true, and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the persons of men.” This was intended to make a compliment the vehicle of more speedily ensnaring him, by doing away with every suspicion of their motive, or their aim:—“Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?” Now mark, if he had answered yes, or no, in either case he would have been caught in the snare. If he had said, “It *is* lawful to give tribute to Cæsar,” then the high-churchmen would have gone into their convocation, and said; “This man is a complete Erastian! He actually wishes Cæsar to domineer over us; he wants the Roman empire to be supreme over God’s chosen heritage. Is this the son of David? Instead of standing up for the rights and privileges of Judea, he is the advocate of the domination of the Roman empire. We thought the Messiah would have got rid of that supremacy.” On the other hand, if he had said, “It is *not* lawful to give tribute to Cæsar;” then the Herodians would have said, “Here is a loyal sub-

ject! He will not pay the tribute that is justly due to Cæsar, and that every subject fairly owes." But how beautiful was our Lord's reply! How consistent with truth! how sensible! how suitable! how fitted to dispose of all difficulties of the case! He said, "Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription is this upon it?" They saw plainly that it was Cæsar's image struck upon it, and that it was his superscription written upon it. He, therefore, said to the Pharisees: "You see that this coin bears the image of Cæsar. Well, that is evidence that it is Cæsar's. It is evidence that he is the lawful king, because the currency of the realm bears his imperial image. Therefore, render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's; and render unto God that which is God's." There lies the distinction. "If this be not Cæsar's, why has it got his image upon it? If it be Cæsar's, why should you hesitate to render it to him? Render, therefore, unto Cæsar what Cæsar has branded or stamped as his own; and render unto God those loftier obligations which belong to him." "And they marvelled at him." And, no doubt, it taught a lesson instructive both to Pharisees and Herodians, and yet the Saviour was caught in the meshes and snares of neither.

Then there came the Sadducees. These were a different class. All Judea was divided into different parties. The Herodians felt no obligation but Cæsar's sceptre. The Pharisees felt no obligation but the traditions of the elders, and the power of the Sanhedrim; and the Sadducees were a sort of infidel latitudinarian sect, whom we should call

Rationalists. They were the Socinians or Unitarians of the day. These Sadducees came to Jesus, and they thought that, as neither the Herodians nor the Pharisees had involved him in difficulty, they would put a question that should thoroughly overwhelm him, and it was to the following effect: that a woman had seven husbands in succession. I do not believe the case was historically true,—but it was at least possible. The husbands died in succession; and they wanted to know whether the doctrine of Jesus, which they thought nonsense, could be consistent with this; “Whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.”

Now, it was really a very silly question; but it seemed to them a very important one; and they thought that it would disprove the resurrection of the dead, which the very question that they put clearly shows Jesus to have constantly and fully taught. Now his answer was, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures?” How remarkable, not for its singularity, is that answer, but from its frequency. Jesus, the Inspirer of the Scriptures, appeals to the Scriptures. He might have said, “I am the wisdom of God, and therefore, I tell you so and so.” But he appeals to the Scriptures, which he had inspired by his Spirit, and puts the highest dignity upon that Book, by showing that the Author of the Book constantly referred to it for the solution of every difficulty. “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry

nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven." For in the resurrection, the relations that are beautiful on earth, shall be utterly unknown. Not that one shall fail to recognize another, but that the relationship that they have sustained the one to the other as man and wife shall have ceased, when all shall be perfectly holy and perfectly happy. "They neither marry nor are given in marriage; but"—in this matter, not in any other, because you must not construe a passage beyond the case,—“are as the angels which are in heaven.” This does not mean, and it would be unfair to quote it, to show that we have not bodies in the resurrection. Our Lord does not use the similitude for that purpose at all. He merely shows that as far as the relationship and duties of marriage are concerned, which was the subject in dispute, the risen dead shall be like the angels in heaven.

Now, this reminds me of a question that has agitated the religious world, namely, What shall be the state of man in the millennial reign? Some think that the Millennium will be simply the flower and the blossom of the dispensation that now is; that there will be greater holiness, intenser happiness, and that in no other respect will it be different from our present state. Others think that Christ will come on earth previous to the Millennium, but that men will marry and give in marriage, and that there shall be death and dying, just as there is now; but that there shall be a chosen few, amid the glories of the millennial reign, who shall enjoy exceeding happiness, to be made perfect in the final enjoyment of

God's people in heaven. Now, I cannot well conceive either to be the correct view; I cannot conceive that it is consistent with the idea of the presence of the Lord and of the resurrection of the dead; for when Christ comes, as I believe he will come, previous to the Millennium, we are told that the dead in Christ shall rise first at his coming, and the rest of the dead shall not rise till the thousand years are finished. Then, if it be true, as the parties I am disputing with admit, that the sainted dead will be raised from their graves, that the sainted living shall be caught up in the air, and that both shall be in their resurrection bodies together with the Lord; then it seems absurd to suppose that the existing relationships of life will be then, and that death and dying will subsist in the millennial day.

It seems to me a pity that pious interpreters of prophecy should carry their interpretations to such a pitch of extravagance as may cast contempt even upon the Scriptures, as well as upon the study of prophecy itself. Many are at this moment indulging in views about prophecy, that seem to me so monstrous that they will create scepticism rather than piety. For instance, the idea of some is, that the Man of Sin will be a huge physical monster, who will appear at the close of this dispensation, being, it may be, twenty, thirty, or a hundred feet in height, armed with gigantic physical power, and exerting a prodigious sway over all nations; and that he will be in God's literal temple in Jerusalem, — which temple is not existent, and if he build it, it will be his own, it cannot be called God's, — that

he will sit in the temple of God, assuming to be God, and receiving worship as if he were God. Now this seems so extravagant, that unless it were clearly revealed, I could not accept it; but it is so inconsistent with other portions of Scripture that any one who reads those portions will see how absurd it is.

The only clear points that I can see in the future are, that Christ will come previous to the Millennium, and at his coming the dead in Christ shall rise first; that he will reign personally, in some way of manifestation that I know not, during the Millennium; that the 21st and 22d chapters of the Book of Revelation will then become actual; no longer prophecy, but history; and that ultimately the Millennium will merge into the everlasting day.

When people begin to go beyond that, and to specify actual events, as is done in a very rash pamphlet called "The Coming Struggle,"—when they begin not to interpret, but to prophesy,—when they state in date and place and time what Austria will do and what France will do; as if another John had come to write another Apocalypse; I think such men are really, though unintentionally, pouring contempt upon prophecy, doing injury to the word of God, and leading people to shrink from a more just and scriptural interpretation of what is so instructive and so comforting—God's prophecy of what is to be.

We must ever remember, that as a subject becomes popular, Satan always tries to turn it to his own purposes; and as more attention has been

turned to the subject of unfulfilled prophecy during the last few years, Satan will try to cast discredit upon it, by laboring to precipitate into absurdity those who ought to be the guides of the people. In interpreting prophecy, never forget that next to thorough scriptural investigation, good sense and humble prayer are the very best interpreters.

We read next of Jesus having silenced all that came to him; and after having answered the Sadducees, and told them that the relationship of God and his saints remains uninterrupted by death and the grave, he put the question to them; "How say the Scribes, that Christ is the Son of David?" You will better understand that question if you will read "Messiah" instead of "Christ." They are both substantially the same word, and the question is literally, "How say the Scribes, that the Messiah promised by the prophets is to be the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son?" They did not answer the question, but the question assumes the fact, that he was not only the offspring, but the root of David—that he was not only man, but Jehovah, God over all.

How interesting again is that passage, "The common people heard him gladly." That is the fact still. Every congregation in Christendom is composed of a majority of the common people. They are less sophisticated, less ensnared by metaphysical inquiry, less perplexed by the pomp, glory,

and splendor of this present world, and more accessible. It is an interesting fact that during the last eighteen centuries, for one heresy that has come from the people, twenty have come from the priest. Far better trust the prince or the people than the priest. The best guarantee that the priest—if you will allow the expression, for I mean by it the minister of the Gospel—the best guarantee that he shall preach truly is, that the people have the Bible, and judge by applying to the Bible whether what he says be true or not. The Bible in the hands of the people is the best guarantee for orthodoxy in the pulpit. “The Bible Society,” by putting every man in possession of a Bible, has done more to keep good and sound preaching in the pulpit, than all the Presbyteries and all the Bishops of Christendom put together.

But, says our Lord, “Beware of the Scribes, which love to go in long clothing and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows’ houses, and”—how horrible! —“for a pretence make long prayers.”

We read, that “there came a certain poor widow and threw two mites into the treasury;” and it appears that the disciples were admiring the beautiful stones of the temple; but Jesus turned his eyes from the dead stones that constituted a dead temple, and saw only this living stone, the poor widow, casting the expression of a grateful heart into the treasury, believing that she gave it for Christ’s sake, and in his name, for the cause of beneficence and

true religion ; and He states a very important truth, that the splendid offerings of the rich were not so munificent as the small offering of the widow, because they gave disproportionately to their possessions, whilst she gave, not her superfluities, but all that she had.

NOTE. — [31.] The Lord adds this second as an application or bringing home of the first. The first is the sun, so to speak, of the spiritual life. This is the lesser light, which reflects the shining of the other. It is like to it, inasmuch as both are laws of love : both deduced from the great and highest love ; both dependent on “I am the Lord thy God.” See Lev. xix. 18. Stier (ii. 474) sets forth beautifully the strong contrast between the requirements of these two commands, and the then state of the Jewish Church. See John vii. 19. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER XIII.

WATCH — JEWISH ECONOMY — A FORESHADOW — TEMPLE — STONES
— END OF THE AGE — CAUTIONS — JOSEPHUS — SIGNS IN THE
SKY SIGNIFICANT OF RESULTS ON EARTH — FIG-TREE BUDDING
— JEWS — THE COMING STRUGGLE — WATCH.

You will recollect that on a previous evening, when we were reading the Gospel of St. Matthew, we had a much more full and explicit account of the signs of the latter days laid before us in the 24th chapter of that Gospel. This chapter seems to be but an epitome of the account there given. It alludes to the same events, predicts the same striking signs and phenomena, teaches the same great personal and practical lessons, and urges upon all, whatever be the age they live in, "Watch and pray; for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh."

There is no doubt that part of this relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that part of it relates to the consummation or completion of the age or dispensation that now is; and you will find that the only way in which we can satisfactorily explain the interlacing phenomena of the two events, namely, the termination of the Jewish polity, and the termination of the Christian economy that now is, is by

understanding that the one is a full type and foreshadow of the other; and Jesus frequently, in alluding to the one, starts by a sort of suggestive power or process of mind to depict and delineate the more magnificent signs of the other.

In the opening part of the chapter, it appears that the disciples were struck with the vast stones with which the temple was built, and with its apparent prophecy of perpetuity; and they asked in admiration, "Behold what manner of stones and buildings are here!" Then, what did Jesus predict? The utter destruction of it all. Now, this was said by a man hated by his country, soon to be crucified as a criminal, without patronage, power, wealth, or influence; and of whose history his enemies asked, "Whence hath this man learning?" He pronounced calmly, and without the least faltering, that not one stone of that magnificent structure should be left upon another. Either this was fanaticism, or it was the absolute truth enunciated then and there by the God of all truth. The event is proof that Jesus spake as man could not speak, and as man never spake.

Then "Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when shall these things be?'" that is, when shall these stones be all pulled down; and also, "what shall be the signs when all these things shall be fulfilled?" or, as it might be translated, "when all these things shall be in being?" In the parallel chapter it is more express; for they asked him, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?" The word "world" is used in a very

vague sense. It ought to be "the end of the age," the *αἰὼν*, the dispensation that now is; not the end of the earth as a terrestrial orb, for that will last forever; but the end of the economy that is now upon the surface of it, the Christian dispensation of grace; and the commencement of the great dispensation of everlasting glory.

Jesus then proceeds to answer them by saying, first of all, Be more anxious to guard against being deceived by false pretences, than to know the day and the hour when these things shall be. In other words, It is better to watch against moral delusion than to be overanxious to ascertain chronological dates. Look to yourselves that you are always in the right place, leaning on the right Saviour, building on the right foundation; and then come the end, the middle, or the beginning, and it shall be well with you.

He then warns them, "Many shall come in my name," that is, professing my name, "saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be." And then he predicts that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows." All these occurred prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; and any one who will be at the trouble to read a Jew's account of it, that is, the History of Josephus, will find that these minute and specific descriptions of facts, phenomena, and events, that were to

precede the desolation of Jerusalem, were most minutely and literally fulfilled; and therefore, though this may be actualized on a larger scale, and with more terrific grandeur, at the end of this dispensation, there is no doubt that these things actually occurred immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. But it seems that some parts of this even cannot be taken as relating exclusively to that event, or as being exhausted by that ruin. For instance, in the 10th verse it is said, "The Gospel must first be published among all nations," or, as Matthew gives it, "must be preached for a witness unto all nations." Now, I do not think it could be said that the Gospel had been preached among all nations prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Certainly, Paul had travelled far and near, and Peter had preached to multitudes of the circumcision; but the world as then known had certainly not been visited — every spot, or leading city — by an apostolic preacher, or by an evangelist commissioned and sent by God: and therefore it seems to refer to the close of this dispensation, when we may expect that as soon as the Bible has been translated into every tongue, and the missionary of glad tidings has appeared upon every shore, and lifted up his testimony to all nations — not after all have been converted, for there is no promise of that — then we may expect that the tares shall be separated from the wheat, the good from the bad, and the Lord shall appear, and shine before his ancients gloriously.

He then tells them, in the 14th verse, what seems certainly to allude to Jerusalem — "When ye shall

see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" — that seems to be an idol set up in the holy place of the temple of Jerusalem, because of what follows, — "then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the house-top" not come down to look for his goods, but leave them behind him.

And then He says, "Pray that your flight be not in the winter," when the roads are rough, and when flight must be slow; "nor on the Sabbath day," says the Evangelist St. Matthew — not because the flight would be sinful on the Sabbath day, but because the gates were then shut, and there were many obstructions throughout the country to a speedy escape.

Then the 19th verse seems to describe a much intenser state of things than the destruction of Jerusalem. "In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." But we are told that the afflictions of the last days will be so great, and the catastrophe, that shall come like a shock, be so unprecedented and unparalleled for greatness, that nothing shall equal them. And therefore this would seem to refer to those last times; and it would appear as if Christ left the destruction of Jerusalem — the background, as it were, on which he throws up a glimpse of the future termination of the age — and described the events and scenes that are to appear immediately before his coming at the end of this dispensation. From the 24th verse to the end of the chapter, I think there is not a doubt that there

is an account of what shall precede the coming of Christ at the end of the age. "In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened." If that be used figuratively, it denotes the royal power. In the Apocalypse we have instances of this. "The moon shall not give her light." The moon is employed to denote the Church of Christ. "And the stars of heaven shall fall." "The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches." "And the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." We do not believe that this is literal, because if this orb were to be annihilated, the sun need not necessarily be affected by the shock.

It would seem, therefore, very natural, and not contrary to the analogy of prophecy, to interpret this prediction as implying the upsetting of imperial thrones, the corruption or apostasy of the visible Church, and the ministers of Christ preaching another Gospel, instead of preaching in all their clearness and purity the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But in order to correct any mistake, He says, "Instead of my coming being secret,—instead of supposing that it will be known to one, and not to another,—do not forget that my coming will be a thing so splendid and impressive in its character, that, like the lightning, it will be visible to every eye; instead of its being a thing that there shall be any doubt about, ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds."

That has not yet been fulfilled; that did not take place at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Our Lord gives a parable, which would indicate the sign of the nearness of the approach of this period—a parable of the fig-tree. Now, recollect that the fig-tree is always employed to denote the Jews; it is the great symbol of the Jewish nation. The blasting of the fig-tree that we read of was a lesson to them; the parable of the budding of the fig-tree is a lesson to us by which to know that Christ's advent is near. The budding of the fig-tree at the end of the age is equivalent to the Jews being quickened by divine life, and showing that the hour of their merciful visitation has at length drawn near. Whenever you see the Jews awakening to a sense of their ruin, beginning to inquire if Christ the Messiah be come, resolving, as they are now doing, to become infidels, if Christ do not come speedily;—when you see the nations of the earth beginning to take up the Jewish question politically, and the Churches of the earth taking up the Jewish question spiritually;—then you may be sure that the fig-tree begins to bud, and that the close of our dispensation, the reinstatement of the Jews in more than their pristine glory, and the coming of the Son of God, are close at hand. Now just look round the world, and see if this be not the very feature of the age. We are told that the great river Euphrates, that is, the Turkish power, is to be dried up to make way for the royal ones from the sunrising—not “kings of the east,” as it is translated,—to go to their own land. One of the leading papers said the other day

that the downfall of the Turkish power, which is daily expected, must be the complete extinction of Mahometanism itself. The instant that happens, you will see the Jews returning to take possession of their own land once more, and build the temple predicted in the last chapter of Ezekiel; and whilst they are busy in offering up their ancient sacrifices, the Lord the Messiah will appear in the midst of them, and they shall then look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. A further evidence of this is, that in America a very wealthy Jew is collecting funds in order to build the temple of Jerusalem; and only last week there was placed in my hand a prospectus of an association organized by leading Jews in London, having one of the Rabbis at its head, the object of which is to collect funds to enable the Jews to go back to their own land. And another remarkable fact is stated by the Church of England missionaries, that within the last few years all the fountains and springs of Palestine, which had become utterly dry, have suddenly become filled with water, as if to foreshadow the approaching opening of that Fountain for sin and uncleanness, of which the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall drink, and be abundantly satisfied. All these things are the signs of the budding of the fig-tree, which is the proof that that time draweth nigh.

But the 30th verse has been quoted as a disproof of this: "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done;" and in a very able, but I think most sophistical, discussion by Mr. Browne against Millenarianism, he says that

“generation” means a generation of thirty years; but he forgot that this is using the word “generation” in its modern, technical sense. No such sense was ever attached to it in ancient times. And again, he forgets that the temple was not destroyed till rather more than forty years after these words were uttered. But the word “generation” is frequently applied to a race. For instance, in the 24th Psalm it is said, “This is the generation of them that seek him,” that is, “This is the class of people that seek him.” Again, in Homer you will find the word *γενεά* applied to a race. For instance, *γενεά θύλλων*, “the race of leaves;” and again he speaks of *γενεά ἀνθρώπων*, “the race of men,” the whole family. And therefore we infer that our Lord means that the Jewish people shall not pass away, — shall not cease to be an insulated, distinct, and separate race, — until all these things shall be fulfilled. And what is the fact? The Jews at this moment are completely insulated from the rest of the nations of the earth. They do not intermarry with them; they have not in many nations the rights and privileges of other subjects; they are quite separate at this day, and they shall only be merged amongst the rest of the nations of the earth, when Christ the one Shepherd shall appear, and the two, Jew and Gentile, shall constitute one flock.

Then the 32d verse has puzzled and perplexed many, and I admit it is a very difficult text. “But of that day and that hour,” that is, the precise day and hour, “knoweth no man.” This teaches us that the day and hour cannot be known. We have distinct

warnings of the signs of the day, — we have distinct evidences of the nearness or remoteness of the day, — but the specific day and hour, and the specific events of it, we cannot predict. And it is on that ground that I consider a very clever pamphlet, called “The Coming Struggle,” to be full of daring — I had almost said, presumptuous — statements. It is not an interpretation of prophecy, which is legitimate, but it is prophesying. Now, no man, unless he be inspired, has a right to predict, specifically and minutely, all that is to take place during the next ten, fifteen, or twenty years. One can see great outlines laid down in prophecy; one can see signs of the approaching end of the age. For instance, what can be more remarkable than this, that all the great chronological epochs seem to meet and terminate about the year 1864? What is also more remarkable than this, that according to the latest analysis of ancient chronology, the sixth millenary of the world terminates about 1862, and that the *σαββατισμὸς*, as the apostle calls it, of the people of God then begins? All these things give token of the events that are rapidly approaching our doors. But the passage proceeds: “No, not the angels which are in heaven” — one can understand that — “neither the Son.” That expression has perplexed many. If Jesus were God, how could he be ignorant of this? The answer is, that every thing that could be said of man, is said of Christ, sin excepted; and every thing that can be said of God is said of Christ. He was God, and yet he grew in wisdom; and if so, it is possible that there were things in the future that he did

not know. How the Infinite can be finite — how the Omniscient cannot know — how Omnipotence can be weakness, I cannot say; but the Bible announces the fact, and I embrace it as a truth clearly revealed, but not luminous — a mystery which we shall know hereafter, but cannot know now.

However, the practical lesson which our blessed Lord delivers from all this is, “Watch.” Watch what? The signs of the times, the predictions of prophecy; watch against evil, against danger, and your own heart, — watch and pray, that you may have grace to stand, and be ready for the coming of the Son of man.

CHAPTER XIII. 22.

FORMS OF EVIL — SEDUCTIVE SYSTEMS — FALSE TEACHERS —
MIRACLES — THE ELECT.

“FOR false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” It seems from this verse, as well as from the whole chapter, clearly a duty to study unfulfilled as well as fulfilled prophecy. If we are not to study prophecy that is unfulfilled, why is that prophecy given? What would be the use of being convinced that the Bible is true, when all these things shall have come to pass, and the present economy shall have passed away? The future is described for our perusal in the present. John begins the Apocalypse by saying, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of the prophecy of this book.” Besides, the Protestant rule of faith is not fulfilled prophecy, but prophecy fulfilled and unfulfilled. The whole Bible is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. Only distinguish between prophesying and interpreting written prophecy. The first is the prerogative of a prophet, and the latter is the duty of every peruser of God’s Holy Word. The future, I admit, is not so

clearly delineated as the past. If it were, human responsibility would cease. If I saw clearly to-day what would be the precise result to-morrow, present duty would be merged in the expectation of future fulfilment of prophecy. But the future is so clearly delineated, that I can see a dim and shadowy outline of what will be to comfort me; and yet it is so darkly delineated, that it does not interfere with my personal responsibility at all. It is a stepping-stone in the majestic current of the years, that enables me to see the rolling eddies of the stream, and the direction it takes.

Now one of the warnings contained in this most instructive chapter is that which I have now read, namely, that there shall come false Christs and false prophets, who shall deceive many. This specific prediction disposes of the objection that has been often made to Christianity, — if God introduced this true religion, why has he suffered so many false ones? Why do we find Mahometanism, a dark and overshadowing despotism, in the East; and Romanism, a cold and freezing cloud, in the West? I answer, If these had not appeared, the objection to Christianity had been very powerful indeed; but the fact that they have appeared is only the fulfilment of what Christ has foretold: for he has warned you of these things. It is a great law in this world that all good has its shadow. Excellence has always its imitation; genius has always its mimicry; Christ, antichrist; Christianity, popery. And one can easily see that truth coming into a fallen world can be treated and disposed of by fallen men in two ways, — either it

must be resisted and put out, or it must be counterfeited, imitated, diverted, and perverted. Satan tried the first process, the extinction of the truth, the fagot, and the fire; but his last, and his masterpiece, is the attempted destruction of the truth by the imitation and mimicry of it; and this has been successful in every age; and just on the eve of the appearance of our Lord it will be more successful than ever: for false Christs and false prophets will come, so that they shall deceive many.

I said in the course of my previous expository remarks on this chapter, that part of this occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem. At the siege of Jerusalem, one Dosythius, a Samaritan, appeared, and said he was Christ; Simon Magus also pretended to be the Son of God: but these were dim types on a small scale of the delusive and deceptive mimicries that will appear, as the end draws near. As the night closes in, the birds of night spread their wings, and make their appearance; and as the twilight of this dispensation deepens, false Christs and false prophets shall appear, and deceive many, even, if possible, the very elect. And indeed the great false Christ has already appeared—the *antichristos*, the one that takes the place of Christ, that assumes the prerogatives of Christ, sitting in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God. But along with that, one can see starting from different points of the compass evil and ominous shadows that may become consolidated into intenser and more awful prophets of evil. For instance, we read in many of the German and American divines, that Christianity is obso-

lete, and that they expect the future Christ still to come. Such is the language of Emerson and Carlyle, and men of that school. What blasphemy! and and yet what evidence of the growth of the deceptive ones predicted in the text, the false Christs and the false prophets who shall deceive many. And again, what is Mormonism, but just one of the horrid deceptions springing from the stagnant marshes of human corruption in the last days; and how painful it is that that horrid delusion is not confined to one State far off across the Atlantic, but is creeping into English parishes, deluding thousands to their ruin in this life, and doubtless to their ruin in the life to come.

But it is possible to have a false Christ, and yet not to renounce the name of Christians, or accept a palpable pretender in his room or stead. Whatever you place in the room of Christ, — not in the creed that you repeat, but in the theology of your heart, — that is practically and personally to you a false Christ, or one in the room of Christ. If you take the Church for your Saviour, as thousands do, you are worshipping a false Christ. If you put fasting or feasting, the sacrament of Baptism, or the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; if you put your goodness, or your virtues, or any thing you are, or have done, as the ground of your acceptance before God, you clothe a human thing with divine attributes, and you have taken another Christ, another Saviour, and thereby another Gospel. In the realm of spiritual things — by which I do not mean ecclesiastical things — Christ is the only King to rule you, the only Prophet to teach you, the only Priest that died for

you, and that ever liveth to make intercession for you. Beware, then, lest under the guise of humility you are trusting to a false Christ; beware, lest under the assumed name of high-churchmanship we are losing sight of him who is the Lord and Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. It matters not that it be a divine or a true thing, if you put it in Christ's place, you make it your Saviour, and you are one of those who are seduced to believe a lie.

But not only are false Christs to appear, but also false prophets. Such false saviours will also have their false preachers or ministers. A prophet here does not mean one who predicts future events, but a teacher or preacher. Now I do not say that every communicant is capable of discriminating between what is the truth and what is not, but I do say that every true Christian is capable of pronouncing whether a sermon be the Gospel or not; "for ye have an unction of the Holy One, and ye know all things." These false prophets may be gifted with extraordinary eloquence; but that only makes them the more dangerous, and the more fitted to seduce; not more scriptural.

Again, these false teachers may be men of the most blameless lives. There is not always a corrupt life with a corrupt creed, just as there is not always a holy life with a true creed. Tertullian, who introduced mischievous errors into the early ante-Nicene Church, was one of the most exemplary men of his age; and the late gifted Edward Irving was one of the most upright and consistent men who ever lived. I have no doubt that with many errors he held the

truth firmly in his heart to the last, and that he died in the knowledge, as he has now entered into the enjoyment, of Christ and him crucified. Thus Satan may make use of great moral excellence, and may thus seduce many.

But more than that, these false prophets, we are told, shall show signs and wonders. Some of these may be the mere products of skill, perverted by the wickedness of man to proselyte to tenets that are evil. They may be mere legerdemain so successfully done, that men may be induced to believe that it is supernatural, or a miracle from God. I believe that the great mass of Romish miracles have been of this stamp: but at the same time I have no doubt that many of the deeds done by the Church of Rome have been supernatural. But her last days will be her most splendid and her most successful ones. If Satan be permitted to actuate the human mind, surely it is not saying too much, when we believe that he will be able to do physical supernatural wonders. But if I were to see a man perform miracles in order to convince me that the worship of the Virgin Mary was lawful, I should not in the least be moved. I should be grieved that Satan should have such power, whilst I should rejoice that it is but for a little season, and that soon he will be cast into chains, and Christ reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. What are called "spirit rappings" are by worthless men had recourse to for nefarious ends. And what is a most striking fact, Owen, the great apostle of infidelity, has actually expressed his belief in these

absurdities, that are now filling some of the lunatic asylums in America with their victims. And as if to show the nature of the system, they have had the spirits of Voltaire and Rousseau declaring that they are in glory everlasting. Satan is here just as in any other wickedness. Thus, then, we may expect that false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will deceive many.

But there is one class exempt; and if we belong to that class, neither life nor death shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. "I give unto them," says the Saviour, "eternal life; and none shall pluck them out of my hand." Now, who are the elect? First, they are chosen in Christ. Why are they selected? The answer is, "Even so, Father: thus it seemed good in thy sight." When were they chosen? Before the foundation of the world. Therefore, they are not chosen because they are holy, but that they should be holy. When man selects a friend, it is because in that friend there is something beautiful or attractive; but when God chooses a lost sinner, he chooses him in spite of all that is deformed and depraved, in order to reconstitute him a son of God, and an heir of everlasting glory. The only evidence of election in heaven is holiness of character on earth. If we are elect, we regard God as a Father. Now many people feel as if God were an exactive tyrant and taskmaster. They pray to him, and praise him in terror; they open the Bible as an awful book; they think of religion as a very sepulchral thing. But these cannot be Christians, or they are weak ones.

Christianity is a joyous thing. God is our Father; all Christians are our brethren; and heaven is our happy home beyond the skies, the meeting place of all we loved on earth.

Now this happy band, the elect, shall never be deceived. They shall glory only in the cross of Christ; they shall hold fast the Bible alone as their rule of faith; and they will look upon that as the best Church that tells them most plainly the only way to heaven. So believing, so trusting, so hoping, nothing shall separate them from the love of God. Your only safety, my dear friends, is within the Bible. Ask not what men say of it, but what it says of them. Search the Scriptures; and may God enable us all there to read our title to the skies, and so to have perfect safety and perfect peace.

NOTE.—[33–37.] Peculiar to Mark, and contains the condensed matter of Matt. xv. 43–47, and perhaps an allusion to the parable of the talents in Matt. xxv. The *θυρωρός* is the door porter, whose office it would be to look out for approaching travellers, answering especially to the ministers of the word, who are (Ezek. xxxiii.) watchmen to God's Church.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENMITY OF THE PRIESTS—WOMAN AND PRECIOUS PERFUME—
JUDAS—LAST PASSOVER—PROPHECY OF BETRAYAL—LORD'S
SUPPER—TRANSUBSTANTIATION—PETER'S SELF-CONFIDENCE—
GETHSEMANE—BETRAYAL BY JUDAS—PETER'S DENIAL.

THE first fact recorded in the chapter I have read, is a statement of the bitter and malignant conspiracy of the chief priests and the scribes against Jesus, and their anxiety, at all hazards, to get rid of him by putting him to death. They would not accept the truths that he enunciated, they would not obey the precepts that he laid down; and therefore, in order to quiet their own consciences, and to be rid of him who wisely and faithfully had rebuked them, they determined, at all hazards, to put him to death.

While he was in the house of Simon the leper at meat, a woman came, and took a box of precious perfume, as it ought to be rendered, and broke the seals of it, and poured it upon his head, at which some of the disciples were offended; but Jesus explained to them that she had done it with prophetic import, with reference to his coming burial, and that this fact should be spoken of her throughout all the world as a memorial of her.

We have next the record of the awful incidents at

the close of this wonderful biography: and among the first the conduct of Judas Iscariot, "one of the twelve," — what emphasis is there in these words! one of those who had been chosen by him, blessed by him, — "one of the twelve, went" — out of avaricious motives — "to the chief priests," and offered to betray him. They were too happy to find a disciple, intimately acquainted with him, ready to give him up into their hands to be taken; "and they covenanted with him," as we are told in another Gospel, "for thirty pieces of silver."

And then we read, that the first day of unleavened bread came. This is an episode that comes in in the history of his betrayal. At the time of the Passover he wished to go to eat the feast, — the last rite that he should celebrate in the Jewish economy, — and to make it the preface to the standing rite or sacrament, to be observed in the Christian Church by all nations.

They asked him where they should go to eat the Passover. He told them to go into the city, and, seeing what they could not see, with prophetic foresight he told them that they should meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, and that they should follow him, and wherever he should go in, they should say "to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" and that he should show them "a large upper room, furnished and prepared," where they were to make ready. That upper room was not the worst room in the house, but really the best; it was a room sequestered

from the tumult, the din, and the disturbance of a populous city. In that room he celebrated the pass-over. It was at this institution that he announced to them, "One of you which eateth with me shall betray me." What a very sad and sorrowful announcement. They all "began to be sorrowful,"—and no wonder,—"and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?" That other was unquestionably Judas. The first to suspect himself was the innocent, the last to suspect himself was the guilty one. This shows that innocence may be suspicious of its strength to stand, while guilt may remain silent, and betray no feeling of the awfulness and criminality of the act it is about to perpetrate. Then he warned them—"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born." Now, is it possible to conceive that future ruin is a temporary suffering, or any tolerable suffering, when Jesus says that in such a case life is a load, birth a calamity, and that it had been better for the man that is the doomed inheritor of eternal misery that he had never known what life was? How terrible must that ruin be, when it is said, Better had it been that the ruined man had never been born, than be the victim and the subject of it.

He then institutes and celebrates the Lord's Supper. "He took bread"—the simplest, the commonest, I may say, the universally accessible element—not a grand thing, which man would take to celebrate a grand feast, but a simple thing, to remember

a sublime sacrifice. "He took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body." Now, would an honest mind for a moment suppose that that meant that he turned the bread that he gave into the very flesh that he then was?

Was there at the first supper one flesh that they saw, and another flesh that they ate, and yet not two bodies, but one body? The words of consecration, or rather, the words of transubstantiation, as they are called in the Missal, are, "This is my body;" and it was a dispute amongst the ancient schoolmen whether the change took place at "this," or at "is," or at "my," or at "body." All said that it was during the utterance of these four words that the change took place. But it is plain from the narrative that the bread had been taken and eaten before the transubstantiating words were pronounced; so that, according to their own showing, it was not transubstantiated till taken, broken, and eaten. But suppose the words, "This is my body," did really turn the bread into flesh, it does not follow that because Christ did it, a Roman Catholic priest can do it. Christ said, "Let there be light," and there was light; but it does not follow that if a priest were to stand and say, "Let there be light," there would be light. Unless, therefore, there had been the investiture with special power of doing the very miracle that Christ did, there could be no power; therefore, if there were transubstantiation in the first instance, it does not follow that any priest, or a thousand priests in a thousand parts of the

world, can do it ever afterwards. Every Sunday morning, every priest in Christendom believes that upon some twenty or thirty thousand altars, the instant the words are uttered, *Hoc enim est corpus meum*, upon each altar is the body, soul, and divinity of Christ; and Christ had but one body, but still they say that upon each altar there is a true body,—a complete and perfect Christ. They are the advocates of literal interpretation; but the fact is, they are the most figurative interpreters of any. They say that that bread is turned into the soul, as well as body, and the divinity of the Son of God; so that, instead of interpreting literally, as they profess to do, they are the most figurative interpreters who could possibly touch the passage.

Remember, this ordinance took place upon the feast of the passover, which consisted in eating the flesh of the roasted lamb laid upon the table, over which one said, "This is the Lord's passover." The word Passover means an angel passing by the first-born of Israel, because there was blood upon the door-posts, and smiting the first-born of Pharaoh, because there was not. Well, did the ancient Israelite father understand, that when the officiating person said, "This is the Lord's passover," the roasted lamb was instantly turned into an angel flying through Egypt, smiting the first-born here, and sparing them there? No; because he had common sense; he attached no such interpretation to the words. And so here; our Lord took the very words of the passover, and applied them to a similar festival: it is the same formula, and plainly he

meant the words to be used in the very same sense. Recollect what we showed when we explained the book of Exodus. You will find that the words "mean ye" are in italics: in the original Hebrew it is, "What is this?" but our translators have very properly rendered it, "What mean ye by this?" and the answer is, "This is the Lord's passover,"—that is what we mean by it. And so this passage means, "This represents my body; and recalls to your mind the blessed truth that I became man, and died for your sins, to procure your salvation."

Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank of it; "and he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many." Observe, again, if you insist upon the literal interpretation, how absurd it is. He took the cup, and he said, "This cup is my blood:" then, if we interpret this clause as they did the former, the cup was transubstantiated into blood, which is absurd. Our Lord, therefore, uses a figure when he says, "This cup"—using cup for the contents of the cup—"is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many." Besides, does he not call it, after consecration, "the fruit of the vine?"—not flesh, not blood. In the former Gospel, when he speaks of the cup, he says, "Drink ye all of it;" and of this cup it is recorded, "They all drank of it." It is not said of the bread, "They all ate of it;" but it is said of the cup, "They all drank of it." Hence, if in the Church of Rome they had withheld the bread, and not the cup, they would have had a shadow of a pretext for so doing;

but their withholding the cup was the very worst alternative that the skill and tact of a Jesuit might be expected to adopt; because the word "all" is repeated,—so that it seems impossible to misunderstand this to mean, that since all were to take of the bread by implication, all were to partake of the cup as a binding obligation.

Jesus predicted, "All ye shall be offended because of me;" it is written, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Then Peter, ever first to profess, and first to repent, first to smite, and first to forsake, instantly said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." What a rebuke was here to self-confidence! "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." And he repeated his statement, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in anywise. Likewise also said they all;" but probably in a more subdued tone.

He then took Peter, and James, and John, and brought them into near and solemn contact with his mysterious agony, as he endured in the garden of Gethsemane. What mysterious language,—“If it were possible.” It was not want of power, but great love: the cords that bound him to the cross were his own love. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.” This shows us that Jesus had a nature truly human; and teaches us that it is not natural to wish for sickness, or sorrow, or death: it is man’s privilege to pray that he may not have pain or suffering—Jesus did so; there is no sin in shrinking from what is painful,

there is only sin when the shrinking is so violent that it resists the clear will of our Father in heaven. Human nature cried in the agony of Jesus, "Take this cup from me;" but the great model and exemplar of all saints added, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Simon Peter, who was the first to make such a loud profession, was the very first to fall asleep. What a rebuke is here to loud profession! It is not always the loudest professor who is the best practiser. Peter was the very first to fall asleep, when he ought to have been watching and praying lest he should enter into temptation.

We read, after this, that "while he yet spake, cometh Judas," and made the symbol of friendship, especially in that Eastern land, to be the signal of the betrayal of his blessed Master; he came and kissed him, and warned the chief priests that that was the man; and they took him, and led him away. Jesus meekly remonstrates, and asks them why and wherefore: they had no excuse to give; and he was led away to the high-priest. And then, to show what Peter's loud profession was worth, it is said, Peter followed him "afar off." He began to be frightened for his own safety: he did not wish to desert him, but he did not like to be in the van; he therefore fell into the rear, ready for escape, if escape should be necessary; and also in a position in which he might, without committing himself to hazard, be prepared for some act to warrant his loud profession; he loved his Master, he loved himself apparently more. And when he followed afar off, we read that he went into the palace of the high-priest, and sat — where he had

no business to sit — with the servants, “and warmed himself at the fire.” What had he to do with the enemies of his blessed Master? If he went to preach to them, he was right; but if he went to sit down with them, as if he were not a follower of Christ, it was a desertion of his Lord.

We read that “there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another, made without hands.” Here is a specimen of tradition. Jesus did not say, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands,” but he spoke of his own body. But these witnesses so contradicted themselves, that their testimony could not have been received except by judges whose minds were made up to condemn. Jesus then enunciated a striking truth, — “Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Then the high-priest said that this was blasphemy, and they pronounced him worthy of death. So he was, if he was not more than man; if he was not the Christ, he was guilty of blasphemy. But we know that it was strict truth, for he was the Son of God.

Then we have the melancholy history of Peter, — his denial of his Master with an oath to a maid, who ought not to have frightened him. What a terrible apostasy was here! and yet not one of the apostles was sufficiently faithful and devoted, until after the day of Pentecost. Peter seems to have made up for this, if one may so speak, by his subsequent conduct. And it

is remarkable that Peter, in many expressions in his Epistles, and in the Acts of the Apostles, shows that his mind was never free from the recollection of his sinful denial. For instance, he says, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," — as if the recollection of his own offence was that of the very greatest that he could speak of. And so, in his own Epistles, he shows clear signs indicating the constant recollection of his sin. Thus we see that sin may be forgiven to the conscience, and yet not expunged from the memory. Let us learn from his fall caution, and from his subsequent history to be faithful, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

NOTE. — [1, 2.] The account of the events preceding the Passion in our Gospel takes a middle rank between those of Matthew and Luke. It contains very few words which are not to be found in one or other of them; but at the same time the variations from both are so frequent and irregular, as in my opinion wholly to preclude the idea that Mark had ever seen either. The minute analysis of any passage in the three will, I think, convince an unprejudiced examiner of this. Matt. xxvi. 1-5, Luke xxii. 1, 2.

[45.] Παῖσι appears to have been the usual form in which Judas addressed our Lord (see Matt. xxvi. 25). But we must not conclude from this, with Bengel, that he never seems to have called him Lord (see Matt. vii. 21, 22).

[51.] It is impossible to determine, and therefore idle to inquire, who this was. It seems to have been some attached disciple of the Lord, (probably well known to the readers of Mark,) who had gone to rest and had been aroused by the intelligence. The disciples were not laid hold of: this person perhaps was throwing some obstacle in the way of the removal of Jesus; or he may have been laid hold of merely in wantonness, from his unusual gait. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER XV.

LAST SUFFERINGS OF JESUS — PILATE — SILENCE OF JESUS — BARABBAS PREFERRED TO THE SON OF GOD — ECCLESIASTICAL SUCCESSION — PILATE'S MISERABLE CONDUCT — JESUS CRUCIFIED — DARKNESS — HOUR OF CRUCIFIXION — THE CRY ON THE CROSS.

WE now come to the close of that awful tragedy, unequalled in the history of the world, alike in its character, its virtue, and its woe.

We read that the elders, and the scribes, and the whole council, actuated by the intensest feelings of malignity and jealousy, bound Jesus, and took him to Pilate, in order that he might be punished. Pilate, whose character evidences that he was the mere tool and puppet of an ecclesiastical council, and not allowed to act according to his own judgment, asked him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" — they say that you are; is this your own assumption and pretension? "And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it," — an expression equivalent to "I am — I am the King of the Jews."

"And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing." Why was Jesus silent? There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent. When a charge is made against

one which one has repudiated over and over again, and that charge has no competent witnesses to sustain it, no evidence of its veracity nor of its reality, then, not discussion, not reiterated denial, but silence is the most dignified, the most suitable, we would say the most dutiful. What was the use of denial repeated, where denial was so treated? What was the use of replying to charges which had no evidence to sustain them? It requires in us grace to be silent when falsely accused; and there is often more grace seen in eloquent silence than in many words. Where reply is required, reply should be made: but where defence can be of no value, and it is only reiterating what we have already said, there silence is alike most significant and most becoming.

It was the custom, we read, at the great feast of the Passover, which was now being celebrated, to release a prisoner. This was not a divine institution, but, as the Romans had the civil supremacy of Judea, in order to keep the Jews in good humor, or in contentment, they were in the habit of indulging them with various boons, which pleased them, and cost the Roman government nothing. The Romans, therefore, had introduced the custom, in order to show respect to a Jewish festival in which they did not believe, of releasing a prisoner at that time. There were many prisoners, charged with insurrection and with murder, and a ringleader of the name of Barabbas, the worst and the most guilty of all. And when Pilate asked, "Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews?" — evidently prepared to do so, because he knew that the priests had betrayed him

for envy — “the chief priests moved the people” — urged them — “that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.” What a spectacle is here! The civil power was willing to do justly, apparently the people were very much disposed to be guided to do what was right; but the priests — the ecclesiastical power — thirsting, under the stirrings of ecclesiastical ambition, for supremacy and for power, put it into the people to demand Barabbas, and release a robber and murderer in preference to the holy, the spotless, the innocent Son of God! And who were these chief priests? They had a true succession, mark you; the Jewish priests had not a sham succession, but a true one. There was not a priest in the days of our Lord who could not trace his succession with perfect precision back to Aaron. They sat in the chair of Moses; and yet these very priests, with this succession, and with the Old Testament Scriptures in their hands, crucified the Lord of glory. There was no infallible church in those days, and the ecclesiastical succession was not infallible then. Let those who pretend to infallibility now, take care, lest they crucify afresh the Son of God, and put him to an open shame; and let those who think they never can speak error, because they assume to have a succession from the apostles, take care, lest they teach people to prefer a Barabbas to Jesus, — a robber to the Son of God!

Pilate, unwilling to give him up, asked, “What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out, Crucify him. Then Pilate” — evidently himself satisfied that

he had done nothing wrong — “said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.” Miserable governor! why did he not resign a sceptre, the dignities and the duties of which he could not fulfil? Why did he not rather fling place and power to the winds, than dare to do what his conscience told him was wrong, — what he knew was the demand of mere ecclesiastical spite, — what he knew was the betrayal of an innocent man? How sorrowful a spectacle, a chief ruler becoming the puppet of a mob, the tool of ecclesiastics! and in order to escape the fury of the one, and to content the rabid passions of the other, he committed the awful sin of giving up the Son of God to be crucified!

We read next of the treatment which Jesus received. “They clothed him with purple,” the symbol of majesty and royalty, as much as to say, You pretend to be the king of the Jews, we will treat you, contemptuously, as such — “and platted a crown of thorns” — a mock symbol of sovereignty — “and put it about his head” — to torture him, and to be to them an element of triumph. “And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.”

And all this while, what did Jesus do? We read nothing of an expression that he uttered, of a remonstrance that he made. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,

so he opened not his mouth." "Reviled, he reviled not again." Truly this was the Son of God.

We then read that "they bring him unto the place Golgotha," so called because it was a place used for the burial of criminals, or, as some think, because it was a mound, or hill, shaped very much like the crown of the human head, and called from its appearance, Golgotha, the place of a skull. "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh" — which made it bitter, and which was generally given to criminals. "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And the superscription of his accusation was written over" — not meant to be the expression of the truth, but which was precisely so, neither more or less — "The King of the Jews." And in order to degrade him, and show in what category they placed him, he was crucified between two thieves. And thus, while they were venting their spite against him, they were unquestionably fulfilling the ancient prophecy — "He was numbered with the transgressors."

We read then of the conduct of those that were beside the cross — "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." And then they said — "He saved others; himself he cannot save." They meant that for reproach; it was literal and exact truth. He did save others. The blind, whose eyes he opened; the deaf, whose ears he unstopped; Lazarus, once dead and now living; the raised son of the widow of Nain; men that felt their sins forgiven; chiefest of sinners, who found themselves

reinstated, clustered round him, and acknowledged, "He saved not only others, he saved us." But the inference, "Himself he cannot save," in the sense in which they used it, was wrong; in its right sense was perfectly true: he could not save himself, but why? Not for want of power, because he was omnipotent; but because he laid down his life for his foes. The cords that bound him to the cross were cords of love. What prevented him saving himself was because it required the sacrifice of himself in order that he might save others; it was because he would not save himself that he could not; that they who could not save themselves might be everlastingly saved by him.

"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land." I must state now what has been quoted by some skeptics as a sort of contradiction. Mark says, in the 25th verse — "And it was the *third* hour, and they crucified him." John says — "It was the *sixth* hour." Now, some have supposed that there is a mistake here in the original manuscript; and singular enough, this very text — namely, the 25th verse of this 15th chapter — occurs in an ancient writer, "It was the *sixth* hour," the very same as John. I will explain how this is: because, while the Bible is God's word, and its maintenance is a special miracle, yet still, by the carelessness of a transcriber, or of a printer, a slight error might creep in, but which would be detected by subsequent and minute investigation.

The numbers in the ancient Greek manuscripts are given by letters. The gamma, the third letter,

denotes *three*; alpha, *one*; beta, *two*; gamma, *three*: then the number *six* is denoted by the letter sigma-tau, very slightly differing in its shape from the letter gamma: the two letters, gamma, that means *three*, and sigma-tau, that means *six*, are so nearly the same in shape, that the slightest twist in the tail of the one, will make it exactly the same as the other; and it has been supposed, that owing to a transcriber, the supposed deviation has taken place. I have stated this in candor and in justice; but I do not think it is necessary to suppose this. When John mentions the hour, he does not say it was the sixth hour, but he says *about* the sixth hour. Mark specifies absolutely that it was the third hour. The third hour was nine o'clock, the sixth hour was twelve o'clock, the ninth hour was three o'clock. Now, it is plain to me that Mark describes all that preceded the crucifixion of Christ, in the Prætorium. He says, after he describes these things, in the 25th verse, that it was about the third hour when these things were done; and then, after these things, they crucified him.

Now, John says it was the sixth hour; and therefore, the way to reconcile the two would be, that Mark describes the commencement of the treatment that ended in the crucifixion, and that John describes the precise moment when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Thus, the two slight differences show this, that the evangelists were independent witnesses, — each giving his own independent statement, and each stating what was precisely, and can be demonstrated to be true. And what shows that this must have been the idea of Mark is the expression in the 33d

verse — “ And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” Now John also states this. The three hours during which Jesus hung upon the cross were from the sixth hour, or twelve o’clock, till the ninth hour, or three o’clock in the afternoon. Now, the evangelists both stating that the supernatural darkness was then, shows that John meant, by saying the sixth hour, the precise moment when Jesus was nailed to the cross; and that Mark, by saying the third hour, alluded to the commencement of the preparations for Jesus being led away and nailed to the cross. And thus, without the supposition of an error having crept into the manuscript, which one would not be disposed to admit, if possible, the two statements can be reconciled with very great ease.

The darkness that was from the sixth to the ninth hour is admitted by heathen writers, as well as by the Christian evangelists. It has been remarked by more than one heathen writer, that about that very time there was a supernatural darkness, so dense that the stars, for a considerable time, were seen at noonday. It was meet that the sun should be hid when the Son of God underwent so awful and terrible a death; it was meet concomitant of so dreadful a tragedy, that all nature should seem to be smitten with horror at man’s heart untouched, and man’s hands perpetrating so awful and unprecedented a crime.

We read then the cry of Jesus on the cross; which is in language that is not Hebrew, and it is not, I believe, pure Syriac — though I am not acquainted with the Syriac — but a mixture of Syriac and Chal-

daic, commonly called Syro-Chaldaic, bearing about the same relation to pure Syriac that Scottish phraseology would bear to pure English. And when he called, in the one evangelist, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* which means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" or, as it is here, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" those that heard him supposed that he meant the proper name Elijah, or, as it should be pronounced, Eliyah, for Elijah is our Anglicizing of the word Eliyah, — they supposed that he called upon Eliyah or Elias, or as we call it, Elijah; and then, knowing that Elijah was to precede the coming of the Saviour, they thought that, in his helplessness, he was calling upon Elijah to deliver him; and therefore they said — "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down." "And one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and gave him to drink" — that was a sour wine, called here vinegar, which was used by the Roman soldiers, and given to criminals. "And Jesus cried with a loud voice" — we know what the words are that he uttered, they are given in the 19th chapter of John — "It is finished;" and when he had uttered these words, so magnificent in their meaning, "he gave up the ghost" — that is, he died.

The women that followed Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, remained at a little distance during the crucifixion; and after his death we read, from the very last verse, that "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses, beheld where he was laid." Amid all the voices lifted up against Jesus during his life-

time, there is not one female voice expressing itself in recrimination, insult, or reproach. While men forsook the unparalleled sufferer, women, with a love that did not falter at the worst of times, as it had never wavered in the best, stood near the cross and sympathized, if they could not succor.

Joseph of Arimathea had hesitated to avow himself before, because he was ashamed to be regarded as the disciple of the Nazarene; but a great crisis brings forth shrinking courage, where otherwise it would be hid. He had hesitated to avow himself before; he was one that was secretly, we are told, a disciple, for fear of the Jews; but on this occasion he felt that now he must be true to his conscience, and not shrink; and therefore he came forward boldly, it is said, and craved the body of Jesus.

CHAPTER XV. 39.

CENTURION'S TESTIMONY IMPARTIAL — WHAT IMPLIED IN IT —
EVANGELISTS SKETCHED FROM A LIVING ORIGINAL.

WE find that Matthew gives reasons,—not all the reasons, but some of the most striking ones,—based upon which the centurion came to the solemn conclusion to which he gave unhesitating and noble utterance, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Matthew says, “When the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, *and those things that were done,*” — indicating plainly, that there were other supernatural occurrences which came before the eyes of the centurion, and made him come to this conclusion, — “They feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.” We have facts additional to this with which the centurion was connected, which constitute, in our judgment, irresistible evidence that Jesus was, what he assumed to be, the Son of God. But the centurion's testimony was a very valuable one; he had no ecclesiastical prejudices, he was no member of the Sanhedrim, he had no private or personal spite; he was, in this respect, the representative of human nature, and he was — what some think, very foolishly in my opinion, to be incompatible with the Christian character — a

soldier ; and yet this soldier said, " Truly this was the Son of God." I have found the most honest, open, and candid Christians to be soldiers and sailors ; and the least candid, and the least honest, I find, from the passage of the chapter we have this evening read, to have been priests, ecclesiastics, and members of the Sanhedrim. This centurion was swayed by no prejudices whatever ; he had witnessed all the scenes, the startling scenes, that had occurred ; and watching all, with an unprejudiced and dispassionate mind, as far as human nature can have such, he gave utterance to a sentiment which some wise men would have thought very rash, others very inexpedient, and others too outspoken ; but which we recognize as noble, beautiful, and just, " Truly this was the Son of God." And never does nature give expression to its deepest and its truest sentiments, except when it lays aside all calculations of what this man will say, and that man will think, and states its inmost, truest, and deepest convictions.

Now, it may be asked, What was implied in this epithet which the centurion gave to Jesus — " Son of God ?" We find it repeatedly applied to Christ in the Gospels ; the voice from heaven said, " This is my beloved Son," — the evil spirits in the demoniac said, " Thou Son of God," — the disciples in the storm said, " Of a truth thou art the Son of God." And we read in John that this expression, " Son of God," was equivalent to saying, what every Jew believed it to be, that he was God. The Jews sought to kill him, because he said that God was his Father. It is not in the original *πατέρα αὐτοῦ*, but *ἰδιον πατέρα*, his

own peculiar Father — the Father of no one besides. He made himself so, said the Jews, who knew the weight of their own expressions, — “He made himself equal with God.” Again, in John xix. 7, the Jews said, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God;” that is, if Jesus was not God, he was guilty of blasphemy; but he was God; and they, in their cruelty and their wickedness crucified the Lord of glory. We have an allusion to this same fact in the Gospel according to St. Luke: “Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am;” that is, I am what you have called me. And they said, “What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.” And this centurion, who had heard the accusations brought against him, having witnessed the startling phenomena that occurred at the crucifixion, said, “You may call it blasphemy in your synagogues, you may denounce it as a crime in your sanhedrim, you may prefer a robber if you like, but truly this was the Son of God.”

Let us, then, look now and see if we, too, cannot discover in Jesus, and in his history, and in his character, sufficient proof that he was so. I do not doubt that you all agree in thinking him so; but I wish to furnish you reasons for your conclusions; and every man should be able to give reasons for the faith that is in him. Let me, therefore, show you that beautiful character which dawned upon a world out of which he did not come, and from which that character could not be copied, so marvellous, so per-

fect, so holy, that the study of the portrait alone is necessary to make us exclaim, with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Now, I think—and I appeal to your own acquaintance with the Scriptures for a response to it—that the portrait given of our Saviour by the sacred penmen, is so unlike any thing that ever was, or any sketch that was ever given, that if the Evangelists invented the portrait out of their own imaginations, they must have been the greatest miracle-workers that ever appeared upon the world. How can you suppose that four men, one of whom only had any learning, and that, probably, not very considerable, living in the least cultivated district of Asia, could have sketched a portrait in comparison with which the portrait of Socrates is paltry, miserable? Man could never have sketched it; every touch in the portrait proves to me that an Original sat for it, and that they sketched from a living and present original. Read the simple history, and the evidence that it is true is irresistible. No human genius could have invented this portrait, no mere man could have struck it out from his imagination. And that portrait is so perfect, that though it has hung up in the mid sky for eighteen centuries, and all men—some friends, some foes—some critics, some admirers, some haters—have gazed at it, criticized it, yet not a flaw has been found, not a blemish seen; but the irresistible conclusion, witnessed, not by a Roman centurion, but by the voices of eighteen hundred years, is, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Notice the grounds on which we can come to this

conclusion. Let me touch on some of the prominent features of that remarkable portrait. Notice the meekness of the character of Jesus. Meek and lowly he assumed to be, and meek and lowly he proved himself to be. Amidst deeds of beneficence that enriched thousands, he remained poor in himself. With a power that could command the angels of the skies, and all the resources of the earth, he yet was obliged to say — not because he could not make it otherwise, but because suffering was consistent with his nature, and he would not make it otherwise — “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Mark, at the Last Supper, the great Teacher, the great Example, soon to be the great Sacrifice, takes a towel, and washes the feet of his disciples, to indicate what they should do, and to be a precedent for their humility. If a mere human genius, assuming, as the Evangelists do, that Christ was God incarnate, had sketched the portrait or constructed the history, he would have left out such touches as these; he would never have thought of putting them in; they seemed too incompatible with the character of the portrait itself.

Let me ask you to study, what I may call the piety — and I speak of Jesus as a man, never forgetting that he was God, yet never hesitating to admit that he was man; for we say that Jesus was man just as strictly as ever a Unitarian can say it — man in every thing except sin; but then, we cannot be satisfied with looking on a profile of Jesus, we must look upon the whole face, and when we look upon the

other side we find that if he was man — as he was, — he was also God, and assumed to be so, equal with the Father. Well, then, see Jesus, as a man, in the midst of Palestine; mark his piety, his worship, and his religious acts; no asceticism, no fanaticism, no strange garb, no eccentric habits — all was intense simplicity, intense severity. If he spent the whole night in a mountain solitude in prayer, it was, with the sunrise, to go forth and indulge in deeds of active beneficence. He came, in his own language, “eating and drinking,” — that is, just like other people: he had his friends — Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary; he enjoyed the light of their fireside, he dwelt under their roof, he reciprocated all the affections of a pure and lofty friendship; he dined with Simon the Leper, he sat at meat in the house of the Pharisee, he mixed in friendly discourse with all, and showed nothing of that oddity, that peculiarity and eccentricity that you see in every impostor that ever attempted to found a religion, and palm it upon mankind. And while the character, I say, could never have been sketched by unaided, uninspired genius, it is also most remarkable in the portrait which the evangelists give, that they never describe his outer man — his height, his form, his features, his appearance as a whole. You have not any allusion to the outward person of Jesus, that can be construed as a picture of his outward appearance, in all the evangelists. How remarkable is this! They seemed to have gazed upon the inner glory, and to have almost lost sight of the outer man.

And this seems to be partly as a rebuke to that

superstition which is the religion of crucifixes, not the religion of the cross — the religion of outer paintings, not the religion of the inner man: and as if they would tell us that what we are to look to is not what Jesus looked like; but what Jesus was, what Jesus taught, what Jesus did. Now, this alone is most striking proof that the Evangelists were inspired, and that Jesus was a real character.

In the next place, let me notice his ceaseless beneficence. If you will watch the miracles of Christ narrowly, you will never find one a mere freak of power. Never did Jesus do a miracle to show how mighty he was; but every miracle was the pedestal of a truth, and the vehicle of the richest beneficence — his miracles were beneficent as remarkably as they were omnipotent. He himself said in the middle of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord entered me to preach glad tidings to the poor, deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors unto them that were bound.” The blind applied to him for sight, — the Pharisees repulsed them, the apostles murmured, — Jesus healed them. On another occasion, a woman, who was a sinner, poured precious perfume on his head; the apostles complained, and the company murmured, but Jesus said, “She hath done a good work; go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Study him, again, at the grave of Lazarus — his tears, his sympathy, his compassion. Watch him when poor mothers brought their ragged children to him: a great pretender, affecting a great mission, would have thought it beneath his dignity to touch

these children; but what did our Lord do? He took the crying babes in his arms, and amid the remonstrances and objections of his own favorite disciples, he said, in those touching, tender, and beautiful words, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Oh, truly, truly, "this was the Son of God."

Let me notice, again, the remarkable wisdom of Jesus — I say, mark again, in his character, the great wisdom of Jesus; that appeared in all that he said, in all that he did. When he had taught them his great truths, one exclaimed, astonished at his great wisdom, "How knoweth this man letters, seeing he has never learned?" And when others were sent to watch him, they were constrained to own, in spite of the masters that sent them, "Never man spake like this man." Just sit down and study that perfect sermon, that beautiful composition — the 5th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew; remember, that is written by a tax-gatherer, — a low, coarse, uneducated man, — remember who it was written by, and then conclude it possible that he invented it! Study it again; what pure, far reaching, penetrating morality, what acquaintance with the human heart! What a wonderful disclosure of what man is, where man's danger lies, what man ought to be, and how man may become so.

Watch him, on another occasion, seeing them who put money into the plate. A widow casts in a mite; and He, that weighs the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance, said that widow's mite was

worth all the gold that the rich cast into the treasury.

Hear him, again, speaking of the outward robe as worthless, and describing the soul as being the only thing that is precious, the only thing that ought to deserve our attention, and cause us anxiety.

Study next the nature of his discourses. Not like some of our Scottish sermons, full of impenetrable metaphysics, that leave you as wise when the sound has ceased as before it began, but simply giving great truths in the simplest words — throwing them out just as the earth in summer throws out her flowers, or as the cloud and the sky throws out its lightning, spontaneously, naturally, resplendent in their own light, and convincing by their own exhibition. You see in his teaching a type that ministers of the Gospel would do well to copy. Grand words are always very bad; the best words are the shortest and the plainest; for you may depend upon it, that if there be great ideas, the less drapery there is, the more clearly and distinctly they will be seen, and felt, and understood. His wisdom, then, was such as alone indicated One greater than man, — “Never man spake as this man.”

But turn to the closing scene of the life of Jesus, and see there evidence that will make you conclude, as did the centurion, “Truly this was the Son of God.” What a mixture of majesty and suffering, of patient submission and yet lofty power! His word struck down, by its utterance, the band that came to seize him; yet he was led as a lamb to the slaughter: he healed by a touch the ear of the

servant that Peter, in his passion, had smitten off; and yet he would not save himself: he bore reproaches, and revilings, and accusations, and was, what it requires immense genius or immense grace to be, perfectly silent. Again, notice the scenes of his crucifixion, as they draw near. Study the conduct of Judas. I think that Judas preaches Christ the Son of God with a force with which Peter and Paul never did. Just watch the conduct of Judas: he betrayed Jesus — went to the priests, got thirty pieces of silver, and for that sum he consented to betray him. He did so; and when he learned the success of his abominable treachery, he took the money, flung it at the feet of the scribes and the priests, and said, “I have betrayed innocent blood,” and went forth instantly and destroyed himself. Now, why was this? The traitor had nothing to fear — the Pharisees were his friends, the scribes were his friends, Pilate was his friend, and we know, in the history of the past, that traitors have betrayed innocence before now, and slept soundly on their pillows notwithstanding. Then, why did Judas go forth and destroy himself? I believe he was driven to his awful doom, because he knew, as the intimate follower of Jesus, that he had betrayed, not man, but betrayed the Son of God; and that awful and withering conviction struck down all the heroism of his heart, and made him go forth and destroy himself.

Take, again, the history of Peter’s conduct, and you will find the same lesson come out. Peter has denied him — denied his blessed Lord and Master,

when he should have confessed him. Now, watch the history; how exquisitely simple, how touchingly expressive! It is said, "Jesus turned and looked upon Peter," — that was all; he did not say a word, he did not blame, he did not remonstrate. What a look! I wonder if that look had more of pity than of anger, — more of deep compassion for the poor fallen man than indignation at the crime which he had committed. It was a look of compassion, yet compassion that reminded Peter of the greatness of his sin; for that look was so striking, so impressive, that Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Now, that sketch of Peter is so simple, so beautifully simple, and so completely in accordance with every truth of the Gospel, that no human genius ever struck it out — it is too real, too natural, to be any thing but inspired; and the incident itself too remarkable to be any thing but the presence of a sinner and the Saviour of sinners. The despair of Judas, rushing out to commit suicide, and the repentance of Peter, returning to Jesus again, to seek forgiveness, both testify, each in its way, "Truly this was the Son of God."

But we have a most remarkable testimony which may be gathered from the singular conduct of Pilate; just watch that conduct, and you will see that Pilate had some great conviction that Jesus was no ordinary person. First, he pronounced the prisoner at the bar to be a just person, — that was the phrase that he used: if he had been conscious that Jesus had done wrong, would he have said that? And if he was conscious that he did right in condemning

him, would he have gone out and washed his hands—a common ceremony among the Jews to denote innocence—and said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to that.” The vacillation of Pilate was not the offspring of compassion,—there is no evidence that it was compassion; but, on the contrary, a fear lest he was giving up to be crucified One that was more than man. Just watch him one moment. Pilate, who had him in his power, appeals to the mob, and almost imploring them, entreating them to suffer him to let him go. Again he goes to Jesus, reëxamines him, cross-questions him, implores him to explain himself, and let him know what he really was; and he finds nothing incompatible with his previous conviction, that Jesus had done no wrong. And when the Jews reminded Pilate that Jesus had called himself the Son of God, we read that Pilate was then the more afraid. Now, if Pilate’s long acquaintance—mind you, long acquaintance—with the works of Jesus, with his conduct, with his sayings, with his doings, had satisfied him that Jesus was an impostor, why this washing his hands—why this deciding that he was innocent, and this refusing to give him up, this fear when he was told that he assumed to be the Son of God—this language, “I am innocent of the blood of this just man, see ye to it?” If he believed that he was an impostor, then he would have treated him immediately as such; but there was in the mind of Pilate a strong and an irrepressible conviction that Jesus was what the Jews said he pretended to be, namely, the Son of God. And it was this persuasion in the

case of Judas, and this persuasion in the bosom of Pilate, that made the crimes of both so terrible—that they flew in the face of their conscience, and in spite of their most solemn convictions consented to the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. And the Jews, that shared in it, what a crime must that have been—what a national crime must that have been—that eighteen centuries have not expiated; what a blow must that have been, the reverberations of which yet sound along the ages—what a Person must He have been, whose death has brought down continuous vengeance and retribution upon a whole race, up to the present hour!

Again, if we look at the words which Jesus uttered, we see the evidence of the same thing—evidence that must have struck the centurion also. For instance, in the midst of the crucifixion, amid the horrible and excruciating agony of the cross, he said to a thief hanging by his side, “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” He was himself a sufferer, and yet, such was his sublime promise. Again, those mysterious words, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that awful wail that came from the bosom of the Son of God, indicated a sufferer who surely was more than human. That prayer, breathed amid his agonies on behalf of the very hands that nailed him to the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” and those last words that rung the death knell of Judaism, and which were the first notes of the jubilee of Christianity—“It is finished,”—all these were not the words of a good man, or of a great man, but were

the grounds and proofs on which the centurion, with the logic of the heart, as well as the logic of the understanding, concluded, "Truly this was the Son of God."

And notice, as a summary, the whole character of Jesus. He rose upon the age with a purity, a goodness, a simplicity, a grandeur that never were borrowed from the age. Jesus was not the creation of the age,—he borrowed nothing that he was from the age in which he lived. He loved men that neither loved themselves nor loved him; he taught the ignorant as man never taught them; he looked upon sin with infinite abhorrence, but always on the sinner with infinite compassion. If you will study the most excellent picture in heathen times, and bring it near to this, it is not comparison, it is absolute contrast, so unlike was this character to any other. That sufferer in Gethsemane commenced a reign of glory that seemed to close when he died, but that now covers a wider realm than the sun shines upon. That mock inscription that was over his head proclaimed a lasting dominion, and that wreath of thorns about his head was more glorious than a diadem, to which every nation has contributed a jewel. He was, in his pangs and in his travail, giving birth to a glory that shall never die, until sons and daughters, redeemed from ruin, shall be made kings and priests unto him and the Father for ever and ever.

I ask you, then, to ponder on this mere outline of this remarkable biography, and ask if the conclusion of an honest student can be any thing else than that

this was the Son of God. We have evidence that the centurion, perhaps, had not; some of it, perhaps, he had, only it is not recorded. We know that he rose from the dead, and became, in that resurrection, the first-fruits of them that slept. And the Apostle Paul quotes the resurrection of Jesus just as a ground of the centurion's credence, when he says, "Concerning Jesus Christ our Lord, declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead." We, therefore, know by that, too, that he was the Son of God.

He is alike our Saviour—Son of God, omnipotent to save—and Son of man, ever sympathizing with us. What a beautiful and comforting thought is this!

Let me, to confirm the testimony of the centurion by the testimony of an infidel,—let me read what Rousseau said of Jesus.

Rousseau was an atheist, or, at least, an infidel, a hater of Christianity. "I will confess to you," says Rousseau, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so sublime and simple, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manner! What an

affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtilty, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary good man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ: the resemblance was so striking, that all the Fathers perceived it. What prepossession, what blindness, must it be, to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the Son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a mere sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. Aristides had been just, before Socrates defined justice; Leonidas had given up his life for his country, before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty; the Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended sobriety; before he had even defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn, among his cotemporaries, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only

hath given us both precept and example? The greatest wisdom was made known amongst the most bigoted fanaticism, and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues did honor to the vilest people on earth. The death of Socrates peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates in receiving the cup of poison, blessed indeed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors." And hear his last words; "Yes," says this infidel, "if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."

The centurion said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Rousseau, in his better moments, uttered the same sublime truth.

Believing now that he is the Son of God, how shall we rejoice, when, in that better land, we shall see him as he is, and love him as we ought; where his presence is the light of the New Jerusalem, and where they sing perpetually, "Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and praise for ever and ever."

When we see him as he is, and love him as we ought, we shall then feel and say, with an emphasis with which we never felt or said it before, "Truly this was the Son of God."

NOTE. — [39.] There was something in the manner of this last cry so unusual and superhuman, that the centurion (see on Matthew) was convinced that he must have been that person whom he was accused as having declared himself to be. — *Alford*.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS—THE STONE AT THE SEPULCHRE—
THE SCENE WITHIN—MESSAGE TO PETER—MIRACLES.

WE have read the record of the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, of his being carried to his burial-place, a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, with a stone of gigantic weight and proportions rolled against it. In this chapter we read of his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into glory, his sitting at the right-hand of the Father, and his ever living to plead and to intercede for us.

We are told, in the first verse, that “when the Sabbath was past,”—the Jewish Sabbath, which was on the Saturday, (and recollect, it began properly on the evening of Friday, and terminated at six o’clock on Saturday evening,) or some time after it, —“Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.” We here perceive what little hope there was of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, for we see that not one of his disciples even expected it. If they had had any expectation of the event, they would have seized upon the smallest indication of it, and have founded

their conclusion upon very slight grounds; but the difficulty was to persuade them that Christ had risen, and they needed nothing short of their own sense of his actual, personal presence, to convince them that he whom they saw crucified and laid in a sepulchre hewn from the rock, had now risen from the dead, had become the first-fruits of them that slept. They brought the spices to embalm him as a mark and tribute of the affection and esteem that they bore to him, evidently never dreaming that the sepulchre would be found empty, and Christ gone.

We read that "they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun;" and when they looked at the great stone that was rolled against the sepulchre,—and you may guess the size and weight of that stone from the fact that the Pharisees feared that his body might be stolen, and that the idea, or the statement, might go abroad that he had actually risen; and in case of this gave a commission to those that had the charge of the sepulchre to make it secure by rolling a stone against it, and doing every thing to prevent such an occurrence,—when, therefore, these females, (the last at the cross, and the first at the tomb,) with an affection that was not quenched by death, saw the stone, they asked, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" that we may go in, and anoint with sweet spices,—that is, with myrrh and other fragrant perfumes,—him whose body is all that is left us upon earth (as they supposed). But they had scarcely spoken, or rather they had scarcely entertained the difficulty, before a power more than human rolled the stone away,

though it was very great. And seeing it rolled away, they entered the sepulchre,—that is, a hole in the rock, a cavity or a chamber in the rock; and they saw one, having the appearance of a young man—an angel from heaven, as we are told in a parallel Gospel; and when they saw this, instead of the body of their Lord, which they expected to find, “they were affrighted.” Now, does not this carry its credentials upon its own face? How natural; how precisely what you would have expected to have been their conduct in such circumstances, and with the persuasion that they had that Jesus had died never again to rise from the dead.

And when they were affrighted, this ministering angel said, “Be not affrighted;” and the reason why is, “Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified” (your affection is appreciated): “he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.” You perceive, from this passage, that the body of our blessed Lord cannot be in more than one place at a time. You are aware that it has been argued by some, that when certain words are pronounced over an altar, the bread upon it is turned into our Lord’s body, and that on such altar there is the complete and perfect body of our blessed Lord. But you observe how the angel says, “He is not here: he is risen;” the very sentiment implying that he cannot be here and elsewhere at one and the same moment. As God he fills the universe with his glory: as man he is restricted to a place, just as we are. But, he says, instead of seeking the living among the dead, “Go your way, tell his disciples”—that is, engage

in active duty, carry the glad tidings — “and Peter,” — what an exquisitely beautiful touch is that! You recollect what we read in the account of Peter’s denial; of Jesus looking upon Peter, and of Peter thinking thereon, and going out and weeping bitterly. How beautiful, that Jesus should send the first glad tidings of his resurrection to his disciples, and that he should request these women specially to single out Peter, — because his heart was sorrowful and cast down under a sense of his sin, — and to carry him the consolation which such tidings would give. In the history of these poor women we see how perfectly true that statement is, “He came to save sinners, of whom,” says the apostle, “I am the chiefest.” We read, that these women “went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed;” and the silence of deep consternation so completely overwhelmed them, that they ventured not to say any thing to any man.

Now, we read that “when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.” You will observe, that notwithstanding these women said so, the apostles could not believe that he was risen: it was too good to be true; they could not suppose that it had occurred. “Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them

which had seen him after he was risen," — thereby teaching us that competent and impartial witnesses ought to be believed, and that a fact that is told by competent witnesses we ought to receive as such.

He then said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And then, "These signs shall follow them that believe." Now, this seems at first a difficulty, as we know that these signs do not follow those that believe now: we find as an historical fact, that neither ministers nor people can now do these miracles. But what was obviously meant was, that these signs should follow the first promulgators of the Gospel, till Christianity was clearly vindicated, by unequivocal proofs, to be from God; and having done the great work for which they were intended, these signs and miracles should cease and be withdrawn. I know that some insist that there ought to be miracles in the Church now. I answer, if miracles ought always to follow true Christian faith, then the inference must be, that there are no Christians in the world. On the other hand, if miracles were only to be done for a special purpose, and during a definite season, then the meaning of them is intelligible enough, and the reason of the absence of miracles now is plain and simple enough. Besides, a ceaseless miracle would be a ceaseless contradiction: a miracle ceases to be a miracle the instant it becomes continuous. The miracle now is, that the grass should grow, that the trees should bud, and that the flowers should blossom in summer; but

if winter were to be the season for flower, and fruit, and corn, and summer to be the season of snow, and frost, and hail, then the continuance of this would make it cease to be a miracle. If anybody by speaking a word could cure a withered hand, unloose the tongue of the dumb, unstop the ears of the deaf, or open the eyes of the blind, it would cease to be a miracle; for the continuance of such a phenomenon would make it cease to be wonderful at all. What makes a miracle is simply its rarity, and from its contradicting what is the ordinary course of events; and the instant that it comes to be continuous, that instant it takes its place among natural and ordinary occurrences. Again, the fact that the vine grows, that it bears blossom, and that the blossom issues in fruit, and that the fruit is turned into wine, is just as great a miracle as for water to be turned into wine by a single word, only we are accustomed to the one, and we call it, therefore, the law of nature, and we are not accustomed to the other, and we call it, therefore, a miracle; but if words could turn water always into wine, then that would come to be a natural phenomenon, and would cease to be a miracle altogether; and the dews, the rains, the soil, and the sap running up the stem, and developing themselves into blossom, and fruit, and that into wine, would become then the rare or miraculous thing. A ceaseless miracle, therefore, is no miracle at all; and to assume that there shall be miracles always, or constant contradictions to the ordinary laws of nature, would be to suppose what would bring all things into confusion, and cease to subserve,

because ceasing to be miraculous, the great ends for which miracles were intended. But at the beginning of a new dispensation a miracle was important. But, you say, would not a miracle be as important to us? I answer, If competent men tell us of a miracle, just as they witnessed it,—if the evidence be clear that it was really performed,—then we must, by a law of our nature, infer that the miracle was done; and though the impression was not so vivid as attested by a witness as if it were proved by ourselves, yet the fact itself is just as clearly established. If, then, it can be proved by competent witnesses that miracles could be performed, and were wrought, in the early age of Christianity, we have all the evidence that is necessary to convince us that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But we are told that a miracle has no converting effect. “If one were to rise from the dead,” we are told that a man who had neglected the means of grace, and the calls of the Gospel, would not be converted. If you were to see a miracle performed to-day, by an angel radiant with the glory of heaven, in order to convince you that Christianity is true, that impression would wear off by the lapse of time, it would cease to have any effect, and it would be, practically, of very little value to you. But if we have had our hearts moved by the Holy Spirit of God,—if we have had our eyes opened to see the truths of the Gospel,—if we have felt the power of those truths in giving peace to our consciences and purity to our lives, we have thus in our own regenerated hearts effectual proof of the presence and

power of God, and this of itself testifies within us that Christianity is indeed divine.

Now all these disciples, we are told, did take up serpents, they did drink deadly things, they did lay their hands upon the sick, and they recovered. We then read that “they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and”—according to his promise—“confirming the word with signs following.” What a marvellous record have we read during the last sixteen Sabbath evenings! What a wonderful account is Christianity! What a glorious truth, that God became man, and died upon the accursed tree for our transgressions! Is this fact any thing different in its operation upon our minds from the fact that Mahomet once was, that Alexander once conquered the world, that Julius Cæsar was once slain? A fact is believed in the ratio in which it influences us; the truths of the Gospel are believed just in so far as they are worked into our hearts, incorporated with our feelings, and made practical in our daily walk and conduct in the world. Do we feel thankful to God for his unspeakable gift? Do we feel thankful to him for the glorious record of it? Have we had it transmitted from the outer page to the inner tablets of the heart; and are we ourselves living epistles, written, not with pen and ink, but by the Holy Ghost, and seen and read of all men?

May God make this Gospel good news to us,—the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to us all!

CHAPTER XVI. 15, ETC.

THE GREAT COMMISSION — THE EXTENT OF THE GOSPEL — EFFECTS OF — BAPTISMS — CHRISTIANITY A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

ONE part of this chapter is entitled to special notice. It is verse 15. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The passage parallel to that which we have read is found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, where Jesus says to the apostles, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and discipleize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, amen."

These apostles had received from the Lord the richest blessings. They had been great receivers of grace; they were, therefore, to be munificent givers. They had been saved themselves freely by his grace; he asks them to go forth, and prove themselves

active benefactors to all the rest of mankind. No man receives a blessing to be absorbed in himself: God sanctions no monopoly in religion. All yours you have as stewards, and what you have you are commanded largely and liberally to devote to the glory of God and to the good of all over whom you have any influence. No man liveth unto himself: every man, by being a Christian, becomes necessarily and everywhere a missionary. Recognizing the apostles, then, in this light, Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It must have been very painful to leave their homes, their country, and their kindred, and to go forth into the wide, wide world, where they must experience all sorts of opposition, and expect rest only in the grave, or rather in the presence of Him that sent them. They had, in those days, no such facilities as we have. The modern missionary has not the difficulties in his way that these ancient ones had. The paddle-wheel had not made travelling easy, as it is now; the iron rails, stretching like a network over all the earth, had not made communication so rapid. They went forth upon the rough road many a long and arduous journey, knowing only that bonds and imprisonment awaited them, but caring for nothing, except that they should be free from the blood of all men, and fulfil the mission that was intrusted to their charge,—“Go ye into all the world.”

The boundary of their commission was very large. All the world was the diocese of the apostles; every soul in the whole earth was a parishioner of these

early preachers. Clime and country, latitude and longitude, were no elements which they could regard. Wherever there was an ear to hear, there was a claim upon their beneficence, and a call to discharge their duties. Hitherto the Jews alone enjoyed the Gospel; now, that which was a lamp to a land was to be hung up like the sun in the sky,—the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

But when they went into all the world, what were they to do? “Go ye into all the world, and preach”—not enjoyment, not ease, not sinecure, but arduous, persistent, prayerful toil. Well might an apostle say, “Who is sufficient for these things?” What is meant by preaching? Unfold the message intrusted to you; explain it in the plainest words, with the greatest earnestness, addressing it to the greatest number; defend it from aggression, shield it from misapprehension, speak plainly, simply, and faithfully wherever there is an opening for you. Preaching has a power that reading has not. The read sermon is never so effective as the heard sermon; what you read is addressed to the understanding—what you hear comes home to the heart, the conscience, and the feelings. The Bible is the granary,—preaching is the wind that scatters the seeds from the granary, and sows them broadcast over all lands. The Bible is the great fountain,—sermons are the streams that flow from that fountain, and water the dry and parched desert, in expectancy of that promised day when the very wilderness shall rejoice, and the very solitary places

of the earth shall blossom like the rose. We do not condemn preaching the Gospel because we so insist upon circulating the Bible,—we must not preach only, without the Bible, else we shall preach error,—we must not circulate the Bible only, without explaining it, else men will misapprehend it; God's command is that there shall be the preached Gospel, and the written Bible, coördinate—the one the witness to the other, and both to the soul witnesses of the mercy and the loving-kindness of God.

“Go,” he says, “into all the world, and preach”—what?—“the Gospel.” What is meant by the word *gospel*? It is composed, as most are aware, of two Saxon words, *god spell*—the “good news,” “glad tidings.” What is meant by good news? What would be good news to a man dying of hunger? Bread. What would be good news to a man in sickness? Restoration to health. And what are good news to us? The pardon of sin. What is the great weight that lies upon the conscience of all humanity? The burden of sin. What is it that we need to make us truly happy? Forgiveness. That Gospel would be no good tidings to me that does not tell me how the lost shall be found, the dead in sin quickened, and they that have wandered far from God—exiles, strangers, and pilgrims—shall obtain reconciliation to his favor, and an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom. The glad tidings here are, that in my Father's house there is preparing for me,—the returning prodigal,—not the retributions of an angry judge, but the festivities of a rejoicing home. The glad tidings to

me are, that the cherubim that fenced me off from Paradise are now transformed into ministering angels, to minister to me, and to all the heirs of salvation; and that God, once throned on Sinai, exercising justice and judgment, is now, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. The Gospel, in fact, is just what I have been proving on successive Sabbath mornings. "By deeds of law no flesh can be justified in the sight of God"—there is the impossibility of your own restoration by any thing you are, or any thing you can do: all have sinned, and are guilty before God,—there is the universal brand. But the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all that believe, justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,—there is the good news. And there is no difference; one has no more claim than another,—all have sinned; all that believe are renewed, are reinstated in their lost and forfeited prerogatives, not by any sufferings of their own, or by any satisfaction they can make, but wholly and solely by this, that He that knew no sin was made sin for me, that I, who have known nothing but sin, might be made the righteousness of God by him. The Gospel, in other words, is comprehended in one single expressive and beautiful text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life." Not, Christ died in order that God might love us; but, God so loved us that he gave Christ to die for us. Jesus died, not as the

creation of a love that was not, but as the consequence of a love that was: and the atonement is God's grand provision by which and through which he may continue holy, just, and true, and yet show himself merciful to me, blotting out all my sins, and receiving me, in his boundless mercy, into his own presence and glory.

The Gospel — this good news — is not to be preached to the elect only, nor is it to be preached to the reprobate, — if such there be, — but is to be preached to every creature, without difference or distinction on our part. We are to offer, in the name of Jesus, the greatest mercy to the greatest sinner, without money and without price. We do not know who the elect are: no eye can penetrate the hidden and mysterious record that is above, and read in its pages, inaccessible to human eye, the names of them that are to be the heirs of glory; but though we cannot read God's hidden and mysterious record, we can compare what we are with what God has delineated in his own revealed word, and ascertain our election from eternity by our holy, and consistent, and beautiful character in time. If you can ascertain that you have chosen God to be your God, depend upon it he has chosen you to be his people; if you love him, he has first loved you. All good in the heart of man is a reflection from the heart of God; whatever we are that is good, is a reflection from God. We are not, therefore, to preach the Gospel to humanity partially, — we are to preach it to every creature. A man may be sunk in the depths of crime; he may be lost to every

sense of what is just and holy, beneficent and good; all the glory and all the gladness of humanity may have departed,—woman may be a wreck, man may have become a fiend, and both the chiefest and the oldest of sinners; but unto every creature, without distinction, the good news are to be carried, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:” for thee Jesus died, and in his blood thou mayest have redemption and remission of sins.

Such is the commission given to the apostles,—to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature. And he that preaches most faithfully, most affectionately, the Gospel in all its freeness, in all its mercy, to the greatest sinner without distinction, without difference, has the clearest proofs of apostolical succession; for he has an apostolical spirit,—he delivers an apostolical message,—he need not doubt that he has an apostolical succession.

“He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” How sad, that there should be this distinction! One would think, that the instant such a message was made known, every heart would bound and rejoice at the very hearing of it: but instead of this we read that some will not believe. “He that believeth”—here is distinction—“shall be saved.” But some will be so absorbed with the cares of this world that they will say, “I have bought oxen, and I go to prove them;” “I have bought a field, and I go to see it;” “I have married a wife, and I cannot come.” Others are satisfied with the interests involved in the present life, and determine to make the best of it; and

when the minister of the everlasting Gospel speaks to these the glad tidings, they will say in amazement, "Doth he not speak parables?" What a proof of the depth to which man has fallen is this, that when the physician comes to heal him, he cannot recognize him! What a proof of the hardness of man's heart, that when forgiveness is offered, he will not be at the trouble to accept it! I do not need texts to enunciate the truth that man's heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The fact that God has suffered, that the Gospel is proclaimed, that mercy is offered to every creature, and that so few close with the offers, and are happy and holy, is proof enough that man's heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But whilst there are some who will not believe, others unquestionably will believe. There were Simeons and Annas in the days of our Lord, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and so there are those now, who, weary with the broken cisterns of time, bowed down beneath a weight of sin they cannot get rid of, satisfied that something is wrong, but knowing not how it may be remedied,—these, the instant that they hear the glad tidings, "He that believeth shall be saved," will believe and live, and be happy. One rejoices to know that every day the number of these is increasing. Quite true, error overhangs on the one side, and superstition spreads its pall upon the other; but never, I believe, since the days of the apostles, did real religion,—silently, it may be, but surely,—exercise so wide and so growing an empire. If the hosts of evil are becoming concentrated on

the one side, the armies of the living God are rallying round the great Captain of the Faith on the other; and when the last struggle comes, truth shall prevail, and Christ shall be all and in all.

But he says also, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Now many controversies have been waged about these words, but on these I will not venture to embark; yet I would once more briefly remind you, that there are four senses applied to the word *baptism* in the Bible: and the reason of most of the controversies of modern times about that word has arisen, I believe, from the confounding the different meanings of it. In an ancient creed, drawn up in the year 325, called the Nicene Creed, are these words,—“I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins.” I believe that most heartily; but then, I do not believe that the baptism there is baptism with water. You say, What evidence have you that baptism means any thing else? The instant we hear the word *baptism* we assume that it means sprinkling with water, or dipping in water, or other application of water to the body; but this is not its exclusive meaning—it is one only of its meanings: for instance, our Lord says, “Can ye be baptized with the baptism wherewith I shall be baptized?” Here the word *baptism* means suffering. Can you endure the sufferings that I shall endure? In another passage we have *baptism* used in the sense of miracles,—“Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire;” and the effect of that baptism was that they went forth working miracles,

— healing the sick, speaking in new tongues, and raising the dead.

Another sense of the word *baptism* is baptism with water; the word baptism not meaning “water,” or “fire,” or “suffering,” but simply meaning “sprinkled,” or “covered,” or “immersed.”

We have baptism also used, in the Epistle to the Romans, in the sense of regeneration by the Holy Ghost:—“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,” — that is, if we have been thus baptized, — “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ,” — that is, if we be baptized into his death, — “we believe that we shall also live with him.” When, therefore, the controversy is introduced, ask the party that disputes, What meaning do you attach to the word *baptism*? If you say baptism means regeneration of heart, then, by all means, baptism is regeneration; but if you assert that by such baptism you mean baptism with water, then, to assume that this is regeneration of heart, is to fly in the face of obvious facts, for thousands who are baptized never show that they are renewed or regener-

ated at all. And if regeneration be inseparable from baptism with water, there is no proof that any one of the twelve apostles was ever regenerated at all, for there is no record that any apostle, except Paul, was baptized with water; and if regeneration be inseparable from baptism, the thief upon the cross was not regenerated—and yet that thief upon the cross was saved. And if baptism with water be regeneration, how strange is the language of the apostle, “I thank God that I baptized none of you,”—to thank God that he did not regenerate men, when he knew that baptism with water was regeneration! It is so contradictory and so absurd, that one cannot accept it for a single moment.

Baptism with water, therefore, is admission to an outward church; baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, is power to work miracles; baptism with suffering is to suffer, or to endure suffering; and baptism with the Spirit, in opposition to baptism with water, is regeneration,—a change of heart, and a fitness for eternal glory. At the same time, I have not the least hesitation in accepting baptism here as baptism with water. I think, by connecting this with the parallel passage in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we must conclude that the baptism here referred to is baptism with water. The other passage is, “Teach all nations,”—or, as it ought to be translated, “discipleize all nations,”—“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” It is here, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Because we deny that baptism with water is regeneration, we

do not, therefore, trample upon baptism. We cannot make a god of it, and fall down and worship it; we will not grind it to powder, and trample upon it; but we will place it where the Lord has placed it, as the outward sign of our inward attachment to him, and of our acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus. I look upon baptism as equivalent to the sentiment in that passage, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory;" and when he says again, that we are to confess him before man, as he confesses us before the Father in heaven. Baptism, therefore, I look upon as the outward stamp and mark upon our brows that we are the followers of Christ, and believers in the Gospel. It is confessing outwardly—in the midst of men—the truth that we have inwardly received in our hearts. And whether that baptism be administered in riper years, when the profession is consciously undertaken, or administered in infancy, it is the same; because the acceptance in adult years of what our parents did for us in infancy, is for all practical and substantial purposes, as a confession of Christ, the same as our public and personal admission by an outward and public baptism in the midst of the visible church. The purpose of baptism is fully answered, whether it be received in infancy, or submitted to in riper years, when we publicly profess before men the great truths to which we were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

He, then, that believes with his heart in the ever-

lasting Gospel, and, being baptized, thus outwardly confesses before men the truths he has impressed upon his heart, our blessed Lord says shall be saved, — saved from the curse, delivered from the consequences of sin, justified fully in the sight of God from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses,—not amused, not pleased, but saved: the object of a written Bible, the end of a preached Gospel, is the salvation of the soul; and the Bible is read profitably, and the Gospel is preached fruitfully, in the ratio in which it promotes that great ultimate and glorious result, the salvation of souls, and the glory of him who has commissioned us to preach it.

This salvation is not simply salvation from the consequences of sin, as many people think; but it is the salvation, also, from the power, the pollution, and the presence of sin. The unconverted man does not care, if he can only be saved from the effects of sin; but the truly converted man feels that he must be saved from the presence, the contact, and the defilement of sin. The unconverted man, like Pharaoh, if he can only get rid of the judgment, loves to continue in the sin; but the truly Christian man, like David, will pray, not, “Take away the judgment,” but, “Take away, O Lord, all mine iniquity; hide thy face from my sins; cleanse thou me, and I shall be clean.” Now, Jesus, as our priest, expiates our sins; Jesus, as our king, extirpates our sins,—by his cross he takes away its consequences, by his sceptre he takes away its power. Because he died for me, my sins shall not be my condemnation; because he

lives and pleads and intercedes for me, my sins shall not have dominion over me. By his priestly office he procured the pardon of my sins; by his kingly office he secures the sanctification of my heart, and the removal of the power and the pollution of sin from my conscience. He, then, that believeth and is baptized shall thus be saved.

Let me notice, in connection with this subject, that Christianity is designed to be a universal religion, "Go into all the world," — the limit of the sphere of our operations; — "preach the Gospel to every creature," — the limit of our commission. And this Gospel, I believe, alone is fitted to be a universal religion. It has often occurred to me as being one of the most striking proofs of the reality of our religion, that it is fit for universality. The graceful mythology of Greece — graceful, though full of superstition and of folly — was fitted only for the banks of the Ilyssus, and the gardens of Athens and of Corinth; and the religion of Rome was fitted only for the banks of the Tiber, and for a people constituted as they were: Hindooism is impossible, except upon the banks of the Ganges; Mahometanism loses all its power when it journeys far from Mecca, and it seems to be quite impracticable in a cold and northern latitude. But Christianity has nothing of the local or the limited in its nature; it applies, not to man northern, nor to man western, to man southern, to man eastern, but to man universal. It penetrates all the circumstantialia of nation, of country, of climate, of color, and of tongue, and speaks to the great heart of humanity the words of everlast-

ing life and of eternal truth. It has upon its brow, it carries in its form, the credentials of its divine origin. It is a message to each individual. It tells every man that if he perish, it is not because God is unwilling to save him, but because he loves the darkness rather than the light, his deeds being evil.

But whilst this Word is thus fitted to be universal, let us notice, in the next place, that it is to be carried out by human instrumentality. Jesus might, if he had wished, have written Christianity on the firmament; he might have made the winds chant it, and the waves of the ocean chime it every day; he might have made the lightnings paint it; he might have made all sounds Christian, and all voices ministers of truth; but he has not done so: he teaches man by means of man; and therefore Christianity requires instruments for its promotion, preachers for its propagation. It tells us that we are made saints that we may become stewards,—that the unction of the truth is given us that we may communicate it to others. It is quite a mistake to suppose that apostles alone were commissioned to preach, or that ministers alone are now commissioned to preach,—the obligation rests upon every man, and every man is bound to fulfil it personally or by proxy. Personally every one can do much, and by proxy they can do the rest. In his own home a man may be a missionary of the everlasting Gospel, silently, sweetly, truly, everywhere and always witnessing to its power. But in distant lands he must act by proxy; one is a physician, another is a lawyer, another is a tradesman, another is a member of parliament; and

they cannot leave the posts that are assigned them by Providence, and take upon themselves the discharge of the duties that devolve upon them as Christians. But for this purpose Bible Societies, and Missionary Societies, and other means of spreading Christianity at home and abroad, are within their reach, and they can contribute towards maintaining those whom God has raised up in his grace to speak and proclaim the everlasting Gospel. I believe that in the present day there are means for spreading the Gospel such as never existed before. Steamboats have made great oceans ferries, and great continents near neighbors, and the most distant parts of the habitable globe within a short journey. And for those that know and love the truth now, it does seem to me, that if ever the commission was obligatory, — “Preach the Gospel to every creature,” — it is in this nineteenth century. If ever there were opportunities, there are now, unprecedented and unparalleled in their extent, calling, with ten thousand voices, on all that know the truth, to seek to spread and propagate it from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

We have no doubt at all of ultimate success. I believe that the time is extremely short: the great day of the world is approaching its twilight, the dark shadows of a coming night are gathering round every point of the horizon; all things are becoming in their action more rapid, all forces more powerful; as if nature had a presentiment that the day is far spent, and that the night, when no man can work, is now at hand. And this is a reason why we should work

the more: because the paper is almost covered, we will crowd the remainder that we have to say more closely into the sheet; because the candle is almost burnt down, we will make the more use of the little light that remains; because the time is so short, we will employ it the more earnestly for the accomplishment of those great and beneficent results which will bear the light and the inspection of a judgment-day.

Let us, also, rejoice in the blessed thought that, whether by us or without us, this Gospel shall universally prevail. All the ends of the earth shall remember the Lord, all its countries shall worship before him. The Son has the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles." He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the uttermost ends of the earth. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess; one song shall employ all nations, and all shall cry, "Worthy is the Lamb, for he was slain for us." Whether, then, by us, or without us, or in spite of us, the Gospel shall prevail. We are offered the honor of aiding its spread among all nations, and hastening — as far as human instrumentality can hasten it — that blessed day when Christ shall be worshipped from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

But notice here that part of the text, "He that believeth not shall be damned," — shall be, in other words, lost. This does not mean that man needs any thing to destroy him; it is not that we are

obliged to do something in order to be lost; the rejection of the message is the preparation for this terrible retribution. Man is lost by nature,—leave him alone, and he sinks into the depth of ruin, just as naturally as a stone falls towards the centre of the earth. Left alone, man will perish. It needs not that he should commit some great crime in order to be condemned. Reject the remedy, and the patient must die; refuse the Saviour, and the soul must perish. Believe not the Gospel, the prescription for human ruin, and that ruin is not created, it is only sealed and made more sure. The Gospel condemns none, it seeks to save all. If any perish, they perish of themselves. There are none but suicides in hell; all that are there were not murdered, but were self-slain. They are there because they would not go to heaven,—they were lost because they would not be saved. They not only broke the great law, but they rejected the only remedy; they not only were suffering under disease, but they despised and repudiated the only Physician that could heal them. And if it be ruin to break God's holy law, is it not a ruin justly provoked, richly deserved, when men do not regard the law, despise the provision of the cross, and tell God—silently, it may be, but surely—that he might have spared the scenes of Calvary, that he might have saved himself the crucifixion, that Christ need not have died; and if these things be remedies provided by his mercy, they can do without them,—they will brave the consequences, they will stand at a judgment-seat; and if they cannot save themselves by their own efforts, they will risk the terrible issue


of perishing, by rejecting the only remedy provided in the Gospel? Hence, the last sentence, as I have often said, is, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" but it is, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared" — not for you — "prepared for the devil and his angels:" showing that the Gospel is a provision for man's salvation; and that if man is lost, he precipitates himself, by his own deliberate rejection of salvation, into a place of exile, of sorrow, of agony and woe, that was never made for him, and never meant for him, — designed to be a prison for fallen spirits, — but which man has necessitated as his only abode, by his being disqualified, by his rejection of the Gospel, for that blessed and holy rest that remaineth for the people of God.

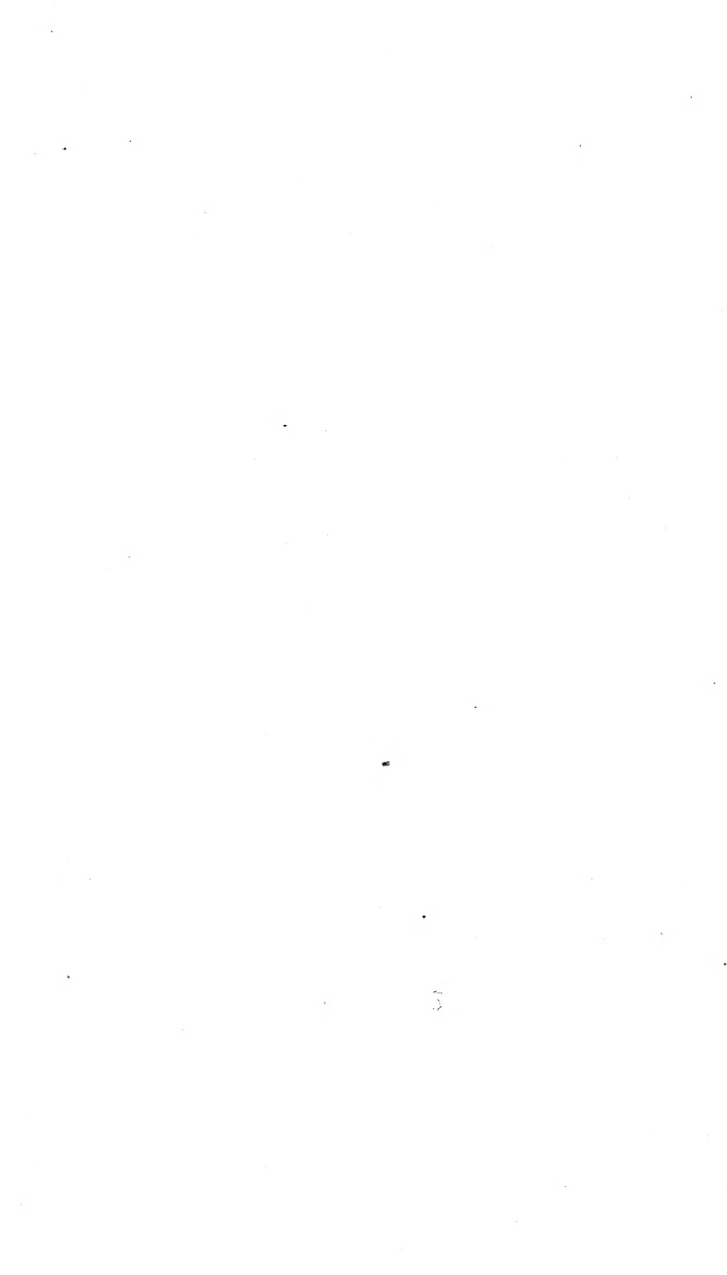
My dear friends, you have heard this night the simple truth as it is in Jesus. Do you believe? Do you accept Christ's righteousness as your only title — his precious blood as your only expiation — his Word as the only lamp for your feet — his Holy Spirit as your Sanctifier and your Comforter — and his glory as the joyful expectancy of your believing hearts?

May his Holy Spirit help you so to do, for Christ's sake. Amen.

NOTE. — [15.] Not to men only, although men only can hear the preaching of the Gospel; all creation is redeemed by Christ. (See 1 Cor. xv. 23; Rom. viii. 19, 23.) "Hominibus primario," (ver. 16,) "reliquis creaturis secundario. Sicut maledictio, ita benedictio patet creaturæ per Filium, Fundamentum redemptionis et regni." (Bengel

in loc.) *Κρίσις* appears never in the New Testament to be used of mankind alone. Bengel's "reliquis creaturis secundario" may be illustrated in the blessings which Christianity confers on the inferior creatures, and the face of the earth, by bringing civilization in its wake. By these words the missionary office is bound upon the Church through all ages, till every part of the earth shall have been evangelized. — *Alford*.





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