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By ADAM CLARKE,

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY T. LONG & SON, 17, JANUARY 1. 36.

THE
GOSPELS HARMONIZED:

WITH NOTES,
EXPLANATORY, EXPERIMENTAL, AND PRACTICAL:

CHIEFLY

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.A.S.

ARRANGED FROM THE BEST AUTHORITIES, FOR THE USE
OF MINISTERS AND STUDENTS,

AND

DIVIDED INTO SECTIONS OF CONVENIENT LENGTH FOR
FAMILY READING.

BY SAMUEL DUNN.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG & SON, 73, CHEAPSIDE;
R. GRIFFIN & Co., GLASGOW; AND TEGG,
WISE, & Co., DUBLIN.

MDCCCXXXVI.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

LONDON:—James Nichols, Printer, 46, Hoxton-Square.

PREFACE.

THE learned Dr. Lightfoot very justly remarks, that “the veil of the sanctuary was supported by four pillars, and wrought with great variety of works and colours: So is the story of the veil of Christ’s flesh, by the four evangelists, and the texture of it, of like variety. For one relateth what another hath omitted; one more largely, what another more brief; one more plain, what another less; one before, what another after; one after one manner, and another after another. And so they bring their several pieces of embroidery, differing in colours, but not in substance,—various in workmanship, but not in the ground-work,—to constitute and make up a perfect and sacred tapestry and furniture in the house of the Lord; and carrying several faces in the manner of their writing and composal, like those living creatures in Ezekiel and the Revelation; yet they sweetly and harmoniously meet together, in the one body and compacture of a perfect story. To sew these parcels together into one piece, and so to dispose and place them in their proper order, as the continuance and chronicle-method of the history doth require, is a thing of no small

pains and difficulty,—and yet, a thing, that, with pains and industry, may be brought to pass.”

To this work, some of the most eminent Biblical scholars, both in ancient and modern times, have carefully applied themselves. They have laboured, and I have “entered into their labours.” To Lightfoot, Macknight, Doddridge, Greswell, and Townsend, I have been chiefly indebted. My object has been, to give the events of the evangelical history, as near as possible, in their chronological order; and to divide them into sections of most convenient length for the closet, the family, or the school. To adopt any plan of arrangement that shall be altogether free from objection, is perhaps impossible. If the contents of the four Gospels be arranged in parallel columns, as Michaëlis and others have done, the reader will have before him at one view, where the same transaction is mentioned by the evangelists, what they have in common, and what is peculiar to each; but confusion, more or less, cannot fail to be produced in his mind. If the contents are so interwoven as to form one unbroken narrative, some passages must be left out, and the reader is placed pretty much at the disposal of the harmonizer. If every text is preserved, by placing the passages rejected from the continuous history at the end of each section, as in Townsend’s Arrangement; however satisfactory it may be to the laborious and inquiring student, to readers in general, and especially for the purpose of family worship, it must be found very inconvenient. Every method of harmonizing the

Gospels which I have examined has both its advantages and its disadvantages. In the present Harmony I have endeavoured to have as many of the former, and as few of the latter, as possible.

Respecting the notes and reflections a few words may be necessary : My opinion of the writings of Dr. Clarke, and especially of his unrivalled Commentary, has been given in a short Life of him prefixed to his "Christian Theology," lately published. Many individuals, however, I have found, who have been prevented from procuring the Commentary, under the idea that it was only suited to the learned. My impression, on the contrary, has long been, that, though "deep," it is "clear ;" and, if critical and literary, it is, at the same time, one of the most spiritual and practical works of the kind ever published. This volume I adduce in proof. While every note merely critical and philological has been left, "with the many strange characters," in their proper place—on the pages of the Commentary ; the explanatory, experimental, and practical notes which are selected will, perhaps, bear a comparison with any that have yet been written on the four Gospels. As the Doctor did not write his notes for a Harmony, and was determined, if possible, not to extend them beyond his original design ; it is not surprising, if, for some of the sections, I could gather but few materials from him adapted to my purpose. That there might not, however, be a very great inequality between the sections, I have endeavoured to supply the lack with some choice selections from other

theological writers. These, I have no doubt, will be valued by every serious and intelligent reader; for, "if the things themselves be good, it signifies very little whose they are." To the blessing of the Three-One Jehovah, the volume is now commended. May all who read it imitate the example of Him who went about doing good, obtain redemption in His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and at last be put into the full possession of the inestimable benefits procured by the great High Priest of our profession !

SAMUEL DUNN.

TADCASTER,
October 20th, 1835.

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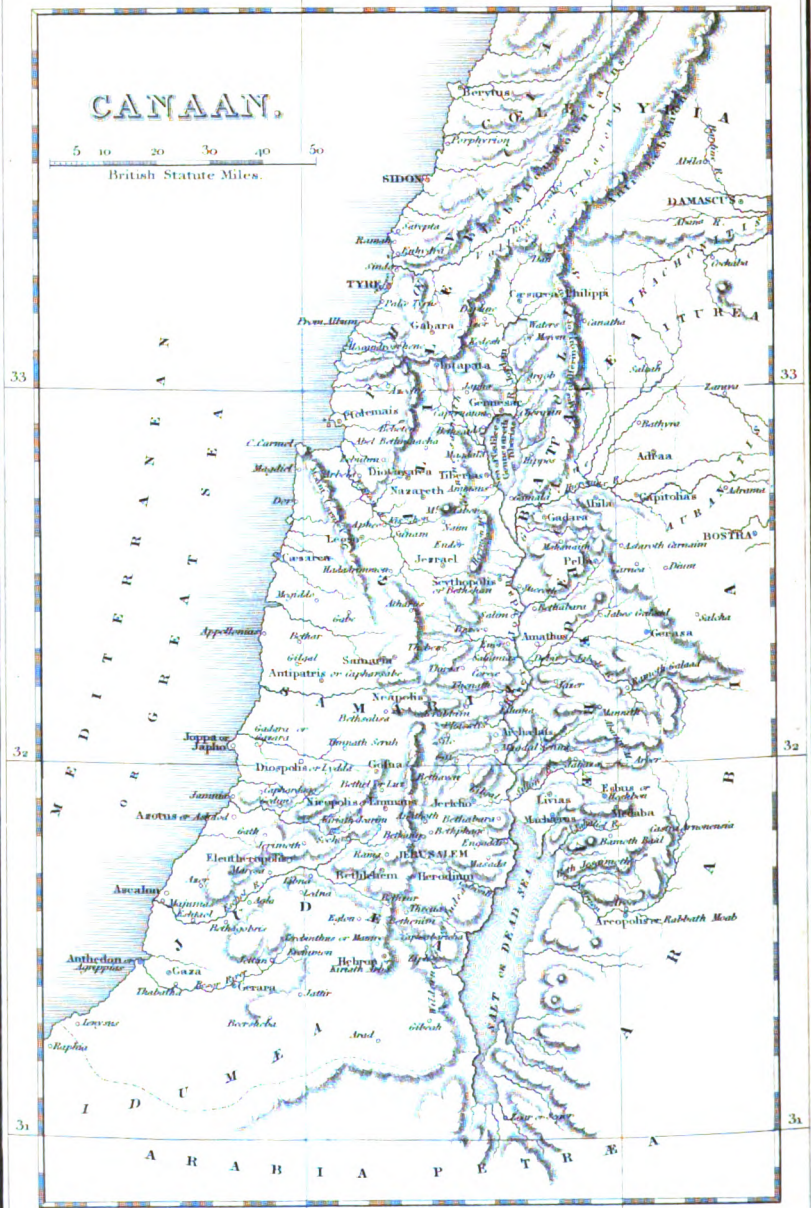
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INTRODUCTION.

PREFACE

TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

THE general title of this latter collection of Sacred Books, which, as well as the former, all Christians acknowledge to have been given by immediate inspiration from God, we translate "the New Testament;" but which should rather be translated "the New Covenant;" or, if it were lawful to use a periphrasis, "the New Covenant, including a Testamentary Declaration and Bequest;" for this is precisely the meaning of this system of justice, holiness, goodness, and truth. St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 14, calls the Sacred Books before the time of Christ, "the Old Covenant;" which is a very proper and descriptive title of the grand subject of those Books. This apostle evidently considers the Old Testament and the New, as two Covenants, Gal. iv. 24; and, in comparing these two together, he calls one "the Old Covenant," the other, "the new;" one, the first, the other, that which is recent: In opposition to the Old Covenant, which was to terminate in the New, he calls this "better," "more excellent," Heb. vii. 22; viii. 6; and "everlasting," Heb. xiii. 20, because it is never to be changed, nor terminate in any other; and to endure endlessly itself. The word "covenant" signifies a contract or agreement made between two parties; to fulfil the conditions of which, they are mutually bound. The Old Covenant,

in its essential parts, was very simple : " I will be your God : Ye shall be my people ; " the spirit of which was never changed. The people were to take Jehovah as the sole object of their religious worship ; put their whole trust and confidence in Him ; serve Him in his own way, according to the prescribed forms which He should lay before them : This was their part. On His side, God was to accept them as his people, give them his Spirit to guide them, his mercy to pardon them, his providence to support them, and his grace to preserve them unto eternal life. But all this was connected with the strict observance of a great variety of rites and ceremonies, at once expressive of the holiness of God, the purity of the Divine Justice, and the exceeding sinfulness and utter helpless state of man. A great part of the four latter Books of Moses is employed in prescribing and illustrating these rites and ceremonies ; and what is called the " New Covenant " is the complement and perfection of the whole.

The term " New Covenant," as used here, seems to mean, that grand plan of agreement, or reconciliation, which God made between himself and mankind, by the death of Jesus Christ ; in consequence of which, all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe in the great Atoning Sacrifice, are purified from their sins, and united to God. Christ is called " the Mediator of the New Covenant," Heb. ix. 15. And referring to the ratification of this New Covenant or agreement, by means of his own death, in the celebration of his last supper, Christ calls the cup, " This cup is the New Covenant in my blood ; " that is, an emblem or representation of the New Covenant, ratified by his blood. See Luke xxii. 20. And from these expressions, and their obvious meaning, the whole Christian Scriptures have obtained this title, " the New Testament," or Covenant, " of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Those writings, and the grand subject of them, which, previously to the New Testament times, were termed simply " the Covenant," were, after the incarnation, called " the Old Covenant," as we have already seen ; to distinguish them from the Christian Scriptures, and their grand subject, which were called " The New Covenant ; " not so much because it was a new agreement, but rather a renewal of the old, in which the spirit, object, and design of that primitive Covenant were more clearly and fully manifested.

The particular title to each of the four following books is, "The Gospel according to Matthew—Mark—Luke—John;" that is, the gospel or history of our blessed Lord, as written and transmitted to posterity by each of these writers. Our word "gospel," which should be always written *godspel*, or *godespel*, comes from the Anglo-Saxon, and is compounded of *God*, "good," and *spel*, "history, narrative, doctrine, mystery, or secret;" and was applied by our ancestors to signify the revelation of that glorious system of truth, which had been, in a great measure, hidden or kept secret from the foundation of the world.

As the word *spellian* signifies to "teach or instruct," hence our word "to spell," that is, to teach a person, by uniting vowels and consonants, to enunciate words; and thus learn to read. And hence the book out of which the first rudiments of language are learned is termed a "spelling book," exactly answering to the *spell-book* of our ancestors, which signified a "book of homilies, or plain discourses, for the instruction of the common people." We may see (note on Gen. i. 1.) that *god*, among our ancestors, not only signified "God, the Supreme Being;" but also "good or goodness," which is His nature: *Godspell*, therefore, is not only "God's history, doctrine, or plan of teaching;" but also "the good history, the good doctrine;" and hence *spellian*, to "preach" or "proclaim" this doctrine; *spell-boc*, the "sermons" that contained the rudiments of it, for the instruction of men; and *spel-boda*, the "orator, messenger," or "ambassador," that announced it.

The Greek word signifies "good news," or "glad tidings" in general; and is evidently intended to point out, in this place, the good message or the glad tidings of great joy which God has sent to all mankind, preaching peace and reconciliation by Christ Jesus, who is Lord of all: Proclaiming that He, as the promised Messiah, has, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; for he has died for their offences, and risen again for their justification; and that, through his grace, every sinner under the whole heaven may turn to God, and find mercy. This is good news, glad tidings, a joyful message; and it is such to all mankind, as in it every human spirit is interested.

I have purposely avoided the question concerning the authenticity of the Sacred Writings in general. On a thorough conviction, I

assume the fact, that they are a divine record, a revelation from God. This has been so amply proved, that the Christian cause has had a complete triumph. I consider, therefore, the question to be for ever at rest. As to the particular books, scriptures, or scripture facts, to which objections have been made, I have carefully considered them as they occur in their respective places ; and I hope I have fully removed every such objection, and have exhibited the doctrines of the gospel, and the facts of the evangelical history, in their own certain and steady light ; at least, I have carefully laboured to do it ; and, like the woman in the gospel, “ I have done what I could.”

SOME ACCOUNT OF MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST.

MATTHEW, supposed to be the same who is also called Levi, son of Alpheus, was by birth a Jew. As to his office, he appears to have been a tax-gatherer, under the Romans. He was a native of Galilee, as the rest of Christ's apostles were ; but of what city in that country, or of which tribe of the people of Israel, is not known.

As he sat at the custom-house, by the sea side, in or near the city of Capernaum, Jesus called him ; and as soon as he could make up his accounts with those by whom he had been employed and entrusted, he became a willing, faithful disciple of Christ. After this, St. Mark tells us, he made an entertainment in his own house, where Christ and several of his disciples were present, together with many tax-gatherers, and others, of no very respectable character, in the sight of the Pharisees.

It is probable that Matthew took this occasion of calling together his relatives and acquaintances, that he might take a friendly farewell of them ; and give them the opportunity of seeing and hearing that Divine Person, whose words he had already found to be spirit and life to his own soul, and to whose service he had now solemnly dedicated himself.

He was placed by our Lord in the number of his apostles, and continued with him during his life. After the ascension of Christ,

he was at Jerusalem, and received the Holy Ghost with the rest of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Matthew, with Andrew, Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, are the only disciples whose call is particularly mentioned. It is uncertain when, where, or how he died. There does not appear to be any clear evidence, in the writings of the primitive fathers, that he suffered martyrdom.

St. Matthew's Gospel is generally allowed to be the most ancient part of the writings of the New Covenant. Many modern critics contend that it was written about the year of our Lord 61, or between this and 65. Others, that it was written so early as 41, or about the eighth year after the ascension; and this is supported by the subscriptions at the end of this Gospel, in many mss.; but it must be observed, that all these mss. are posterior to the tenth century. Michaëlis has adopted a middle way, which carries much of the appearance of probability with it, namely, that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, about the eighth year after the ascension of our Lord, or A.D. 41; and that the translation of it into Greek was made about A.D. 61, or later.

Whether this Gospel were written originally in Hebrew or Greek, is a question by which the most eminent critics have been greatly puzzled and divided. The balance, however, is clearly in favour of a Hebrew original. The present Greek text was doubtless published at a very early period; who the translator was, cannot, at this distance of time, be determined; probably it was the evangelist himself.

As Matthew was one of the twelve disciples, his history is an account of what he heard and saw, being a constant attendant on our blessed Lord. This consideration, of itself, would prove that, allowing him only to be a man of integrity, he would make no mistakes in his narrative. Add to this, the influence and superintendence of the Holy Spirit, under which he constantly acted, and which our Lord had promised to his disciples, to guide them into all truth, and bring whatsoever he had spoken to them into remembrance, John xiv. 26. These two considerations stamp the narrative with the utmost degree of credibility.

PREFACE

TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

WITH A SHORT ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THIS person, the second in the commonly received order of the four evangelists, was named John Mark, and was the son of a pious woman, called Mary, who dwelt at Jerusalem: She was an early believer, and the disciples used to meet at her house. Peter, having been delivered out of prison by an angel, "came to the house of Mary, mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying," Acts xii. 12. This very first mention of John Mark assures us of Peter's intimacy in that family: It is almost universally allowed that Mark, mentioned by Peter, 1 Epist. chap. v. 13, is this evangelist, and that he is the same with him who is called "sister's son to Barnabas," Col. iv. 10; and is supposed to have been converted by Peter to the Christian faith. He travelled from Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, Acts xii. 25; and some short time after he accompanied them to other countries, as their minister, Acts xiii. 5. When they returned to the continent, and came on shore at "Perga in Pamphylia, he departed from them, and returned to Jerusalem," verse 13. Afterwards he would have gone with Paul and Barnabas; but the former refused to take him, because of his having left them at Pamphylia; Paul and Barnabas then separated, and Mark accompanied his uncle Barnabas to Cyprus, Acts xv. 36—41. Afterwards Paul and he were fully reconciled, as evidently appears from 2 Tim. iv. 11: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." This appears also from Philemon, verse 24, where Mark is styled Paul's

“fellow-labourer;” and from Col. iv. 10, where we find the apostle recommending him in a particular manner to the church of God at that place. He is generally supposed to have been particularly intimate with St. Peter, to have written his Gospel at Rome, A. D. 64, and to have died at Alexandria in Egypt, in the eighth year of the reign of Nero. Dr. Lardner has fully proved that Mark the evangelist, and John Mark, nephew to Barnabas, were one and the same person.

PREFACE

10

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

WITH A SHORT ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THERE is little certain known of this evangelist: From what is spoken in the Scriptures, and by the best-informed of the primitive fathers, the following probable account is collected.

Luke was, according to Dr. Lardner, a Jew by birth, and an early convert to Christianity; but Michaëlis thinks he was a Gentile, and brings Coloss. iv. 10, 11, 14, in proof, where St. Paul distinguished Aristarchus, Marcus, and “Jesus, which is called Justus,” who were of the “circumcision,” that is, Jews, from Epaphras, Lucas, and Demas. Some think he was one of our Lord’s seventy disciples. It is worthy of remark, that he is the only evangelist who mentions the commission given by Christ to the seventy, chap. x. 1—20. It is likely he is the Lucius mentioned Rom. xvi. 21; and if so, he was related to the apostle Paul; and that it is the same Lucius of Cyrene who is mentioned Acts xiii. 1, and in general with others, Acts xi. 20. Some of the ancients, and some of the most learned and

judicious among the moderns, think he was one of the two whom our Lord met on the way to Emmaus on the day of his resurrection, as related Luke xxiv. 13—35 ; one of these was called Cleopas, verse 18 ; the other is not mentioned, the evangelist himself being the person and the relater.

St. Paul styles him his “ fellow-labourer,” Philem., verse 24. It is barely probable that he is the person mentioned, Col. iv. 14 : “ Luke, the beloved physician.” All the ancients of repute, such as Eusebius, Gregory Nyssen, Jerome, Paulinus, Euthalius, Euthymius, and others, agree that he was a physician, but where he was born, and where he exercised the duties of his profession, are not known. Many moderns have attributed to him the most profound skill in the science of painting, and that he made some pictures of the virgin Mary. This is justly esteemed fabulous ; nor is this science attributed to him by any writer previously to Nicephorus Callistus, in the fourteenth century, an author who scarcely deserves any credit, especially in relations not confirmed by others.

He accompanied St. Paul when he first went into Macedonia, Acts xvi. 8—40 ; xx., xxvii., and xxviii. Whether he went with him constantly afterwards, is not certain ; but it is evident he accompanied him from Greece, through Macedonia and Asia, to Jerusalem, where he is supposed to have collected many particulars of the evangelic history. From Jerusalem he went with Paul to Rome, where he staid with him the two years of his imprisonment in that city. This alone makes out the space of five years, and upwards. It is probable that he left St. Paul when he was set at liberty, and that he then went into Greece, where he finished and published this Gospel, and the book of the Acts, which he dedicated to Theophilus, an honourable Christian friend of his in that country. It is supposed that he died in peace about the eightieth or eighty-fourth year of his age. Some suppose he published this Gospel fifteen, others twenty-two, years after the ascension of Christ.

P R E F A C E

TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

WITH A SHORT ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

JOHN, the writer of this Gospel, was the son of a fisherman named Zebedee, and his mother's name was Salome. Compare Matt. xxvii. 56, with Mark xv. 40, and xvi. 1. His father Zebedee was probably of Bethsaida, and, with his sons James and John, followed his occupation on the sea of Galilee. The call of these two brothers to the apostleship is related, Matt. iv. 21, 22; Mark i. 19, 20; Luke v. 1—10. John is generally supposed to have been about twenty-five years of age when he began to follow our Lord.

Theophylact makes him one of the relatives of our Lord, and gives his genealogy thus: "Joseph, the husband of the blessed Mary, had seven children by a former wife, four sons and three daughters,—Martha, (perhaps, says Dr. Lardner, it should be Mary,) Esther, and Salome, whose son John was; therefore Salome was reckoned our Lord's sister, and John was his nephew." If this relationship did exist, it may have been, at least in part, the reason of several things mentioned in the Gospels: As, the petition of the two brothers for the two chief places in the kingdom of Christ; John's being the beloved disciple and friend of Jesus, and being admitted to some familiarities denied to the rest, and possibly performing some offices about the person of his Master; and, finally, our Lord's committing to him the care of his mother, as long as she should survive him.

This evangelist is supposed by some to have been the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. See John ii. 1.

John was with our Lord in his transfiguration on the mount, Matt. xvii. 2; Mark ix. 2; Luke ix. 28; during his agony in the garden, Matt. xxvi. 37; Mark xiv. 33; and when he was crucified, John xix. 26.

He saw our Lord expire upon the cross, and saw the soldier pierce his side with a spear, John xix. 34, 35.

He was one of the first of the disciples that visited the sepulchre after the resurrection of Christ; and was present with the other disciples, when Jesus showed himself to them on the evening of the same day on which he arose; and likewise eight days after, John xx. 19—29.

In conjunction with Peter, he cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, for which he was cast into prison, Acts iii. 1—10. He was afterwards sent to Samaria, to confer the Holy Ghost on those who had been converted there by Philip the deacon, Acts viii. 5—25. St. Paul informs us, Gal. ii., that John was present at the council of Jerusalem, of which an account is given, Acts xv.

It is evident that John was present at most of the things related by him in his Gospel; and that he was an eye and ear-witness of our Lord's labours, journeyings, discourses, miracles, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. After the ascension he returned with the other apostles from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, and took part in all transactions previously to the day of Pentecost; on which time, he, with the rest, partook of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, by which he was eminently qualified for the place he afterwards held in the apostolic church.

Some of the ancients believed that he went into Parthia, and preached the gospel there; and his First Epistle has been sometimes cited under the name of the Epistle to the Parthians.

Irenæus, Eusebius, Origen, and others assert, that he was a long time in Asia, continuing there till Trajan's time, who succeeded Nerva, A. D. 98. And Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, A. D. 196, asserts that John was buried in that city. Jerome confirms this testimony, and says that John's death happened in the sixty-eighth year after our Lord's passion.

Tertullian and others say, that Domitian having declared war against the church of Christ, in the fifteenth year of his reign, A. D. 95, John was banished from Ephesus and carried to Rome,

where he was immersed in a cauldron of boiling oil, out of which however he escaped unhurt ; and that afterwards he was banished to the Isle of Patmos, in the *Ægean Sea*, where he wrote the *Apocalypse*. *Domitian* having been slain in A. D. 96, his successor *Nerva* recalled all the exiles who had been banished by his predecessor ; and *John* is supposed to have returned the next year to *Ephesus*, being then about ninety years of age. He is thought to have been the only apostle who died a natural death, and to have lived upwards of one hundred years. Some say, having completed a hundred years, he died the day following. This Gospel is supposed by learned men to have been written about A. D. 68 or 70 ; by others, A. D. 86 ; and by others, A. D. 97 ; but the most probable opinion is that it was written at *Ephesus* about the year 86.

Jerome says, that *John* continued preaching when he was so enfeebled with old age, that he was obliged to be carried into the assembly ; and that, not being able to deliver any long discourse, his custom was to say, in every meeting, " My dear children, love one another ! " The holy virgin lived under his care till the day of her death, which is supposed to have taken place fifteen years after the crucifixion.

John is usually painted holding a cup in his hand, with a serpent issuing from it : This took its rise from a relation by the spurious *Prochorus*, who styles himself a disciple of *St. John*. Though the story is not worth relating, curiosity will naturally wish to be gratified with it. Some heretics had privately poisoned a cup of liquor, with which they presented him ; but after he had prayed to God, and made the sign of the cross over it, the venom was expelled in the form of a serpent !

Some of the first disciples of our Lord, misunderstanding the passage, " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? " *John* xxi. 22, 23, believed that *John* should never die. Several in the primitive church were of the same opinion ; and to this day his death is doubted by persons of the first repute for piety and morality. Where such doctors disagree, it would be thought presumption in me to attempt to decide, otherwise I should not have hesitated to say that, seventeen hundred years ago, he went the way of all flesh, and, instead of a wandering lot in a miserable, perishing world, is now glorified in that heaven of which his writings prove he

had so large an anticipation, both before and after the crucifixion of his Lord.

Besides the Gospel before us, John is generally reputed to have been the author of the three Epistles which go under his name, and of the Apocalypse. The former certainly breathe the genuine spirit of this apostle; and are invaluable monuments of his spiritual knowledge and deep piety, as well as of his divine inspiration: As the Gospel and Epistles prove him to have been an evangelist and apostle, his book of Revelations ranks him among the profoundest of the prophets. It is likely that he wrote for the express purpose of giving the Jews, his countrymen, proper notions of the Messiah and his kingdom; and to prove that Jesus, who had lately appeared among them, was this CHRIST. His own words sufficiently inform us of his motive, object, and design, in writing this Gospel: "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name," John xx. 31. This is a design as noble as it is simple; and every way highly becoming the wisdom and goodness of God.

GOSPELS HARMONIZED.

SECTION I.—THE PREFACE.

A. D. 47.

LUKE I. 1—4.

FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand¹ to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,² even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses,³ and ministers of the word;⁴ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding⁵ of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,⁶ that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.⁷

1. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand*—Great and remarkable characters have always many biographers. So it appears it was with our Lord; but as most of these accounts were inaccurate, recording as facts things which had not happened; and, through ignorance or design, mistaking others, especially in the place where St. Luke wrote; it seemed good to the Holy Spirit to inspire this holy man with the most correct knowledge of the whole history of our Lord's birth, preaching, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, that the sincere, upright followers of God might have a sure foundation, on which they might safely build their faith.

2. *Things most surely believed among us*—"Facts confirmed by the fullest evidence." Every thing that had been done or said by Jesus Christ was so public, so plain, and so accredited by thousands of witnesses, who could have had no interest in supporting an imposture, as to carry the fullest conviction to the hearts of those who heard and saw him, of the divinity of his doctrine, and the truth of his miracles.

3. *From the beginning were eyewitnesses*—Probably this alludes to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, which it is likely were written before St. Luke wrote his, and on the models of which he professes to write his own; and "from the beginning" must mean, from the time that Christ first began to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom; and "eye-witnesses" must necessarily signify, those who had been with him from the beginning, and, consequently, had the best opportunities of knowing the truth of every fact.

4. *And ministers of the word*—Some persons suppose that our blessed Lord is meant by this phrase; as the "Word," or "Logos," is his essential character in John i. 1, &c.; but it does not appear that any of the inspired penmen ever use the word in this sense except John himself; for here it certainly means the "doctrine of Christ;" and in this sense it is frequently used both by the evangelists and apostles.

5. *Having had perfect understanding*—"Having accurately traced up;" en-

tered into the very spirit of the work, and examined every thing to the bottom ; in consequence of which investigation, I am completely convinced of the truth of the whole. Though God gives his Holy Spirit to all them who ask him, yet this gift was never designed to set aside the use of those faculties with which he has already endued the soul, and which are as truly his gifts as the Holy Spirit itself is. The nature of inspiration, in the case of St. Luke, we at once discover. He set himself, by impartial inquiry and diligent investigation, to find the whole truth, and to relate nothing but the truth ; and the Spirit of God presided over and directed his inquiries, so that he discovered the whole truth, and was preserved from every particle of error.

6. *Unto thee, most excellent Theophilus* —As the literal import of this word is “friend of God,” some have supposed that, under this name, Luke comprised all the followers of Christ, to whom, as friends of God, he dedicated this faithful history of the life, doctrine, death, and resurrection, of our Lord. But this interpretation appears to have little solidity in it ; for, if all the followers of Christ are addressed, why is the singular number used ? and what good end could there be accomplished by using a feigned name ? Besides, “most excellent,” could never be applied in this way : For it evidently designates a particular person, and one probably distinguished by his situation in life ; though this does not necessarily follow from the title, which was often given in the way of friendship. Theophilus appears to have been some very reputable Greek or Roman, who was one of St. Luke's disciples. The first four verses seem a private epistle, sent by the evangelist with this history, which, having been carefully preserved by Theophilus, was afterwards found and published with this Gospel.

7. *Wherein thou hast been instructed* —“In which thou hast been catechised.” It appears that Theophilus had already received the first elements of the Christian doctrine, but had not as yet been completely grounded in them. That he might know the certainty of the things in which he had been thus catechised, by having all the facts and their proofs brought before him in order, the evangelist

sent him this faithful and divinely-inspired narrative. Those who content themselves with that knowledge of the doctrines of Christ which they receive from catechisms and schoolmasters, however important these elementary instructions may be, are never likely to arrive at such a knowledge of the truth as will make them wise unto salvation, or fortify them against the attacks of infidelity and irreligion. Every man should labour to acquire the most correct knowledge, and indubitable certainty, of those doctrines on which he stakes his eternal salvation.

“St. Luke held it not unlawful or unfit for a layman, or any Christian, to read the Scriptures ; nor such a one insufficient, by thus reading, to understand the things in which he had been instructed ; and seeing it is certain that Theophilus and other Christians were instructed in all things necessary to be believed and done by them to salvation ; it follows, that these writings must contain fully, and with sufficient clearness, all that was necessary to be believed or done by him in order to his salvation, they being written for this very end.

“It being certain that St. Luke, in his Gospel, doth not give us Christ's miracles, sermons, and journeys, in that order of time in which they were done and spoken, it remains, that, when he promised to write, in order, we understand this of Christ's conception, birth, circumcision, baptism, preaching, death, resurrection, and ascension, of which he truly writes in order.”—WHITBY.

“How awful, therefore, must be the condemnation of those who, amidst the blaze of gospel day, reject the counsel of God against themselves ; either despising the sacred scriptures, and treating them with contempt, or, whilst acknowledging their divine authority, are regardless of their truths, and live altogether according to the course of this world ; or yield to indolence or indifference, and never seek the Lord with purpose of heart. How forcible is the declaration of the Saviour, that ‘light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’ Infidelity has its source in the depravity of the heart, far more than in the incompetency of evidence to satisfy the mind ; and luke-

warmness originates too generally in a unite the service of God and Mammon."—
 preference of the world to the favour of TOWNLEY.
 God; or in the impracticable attempt to

SECTION II.—GABRIEL APPEARS TO ZACHARIAS.

B. C. 6.

LUKE I. 5—17.

THERE was in the days of Herod the king¹ of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia :² And his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron,³ and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous⁴ before God,⁵ walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.⁶ And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.⁷ And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying⁸ without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord⁹ standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias : For thy prayer is heard ;¹⁰ and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness ;¹¹ and many shall rejoice at his birth.¹² For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord,¹³ and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost,¹⁴ even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias,¹⁵ to turn the hearts of the fathers¹⁶ to the children,¹⁷ and the disobedient¹⁸ to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

1. *There was in the days of Herod the king*—This was Herod, surnamed the Great, the son of Antipater, an Idumean by birth, who had professed himself a proselyte to the Jewish religion, but regarded no religion farther than it promoted his secular interests and ambition. Thus, for the first time, the throne of Judah was filled by a person not of Jewish extraction, who had been forced upon the people by the Roman government. Hence it appears plain, that the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10, was now fulfilled ; for "the sceptre had departed from Judah;" and now was

the time, according to another prophecy, to look for the "Governor from Bethlehem," who should "rule and feed the people of Israel," Micah v. 1, 2.

2. *Zacharias, of the course of Abia*—When the sacerdotal families grew very numerous, so that all could not officiate together at the tabernacle, David divided them into twenty-four classes, that they might minister by turns, each family serving a whole week. Abiah was the eighth in the order in which they had been originally established. These dates and persons are particularly mentioned as a full confirma-

tion of the truth of the facts themselves; because any person, at the time this Gospel was written, might have satisfied himself by applying to the family of John the Baptist, the family of our Lord, or the surrounding neighbours. What a full proof of the gospel history! It was published immediately after the time in which these facts took place; and among the very people, thousands of whom had been eye-witnesses of them; and among those, too, whose essential interest it was to have discredited them, if they could; and yet, in all that age, in which only they could have been contradicted with advantage, no man ever arose to call them in question! What an absolute proof was this, that the thing was impossible; and that the truth of the gospel history was acknowledged by all who paid any attention to the evidences it produced!

3. *His wife was of the daughters of Aaron*—That is, she was of one of the sacerdotal families. This shows that John was most nobly descended: His father was a priest, and his mother the daughter of a priest; and thus, both by father and mother, he descended from the family of Amram, of whom came Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, the most illustrious characters in the whole Jewish history.

4. *And they were both righteous*—Upright and holy in all their outward conduct in civil life.

5. *Before God*—Possessing the spirit of the religion they professed; exercising themselves constantly in the presence of their Maker, whose eye, they knew, was upon all their conduct, and who examined all their motives.

6. *Commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*—None being able to lay any evil to their charge. They were as exemplary and conscientious in the discharge of their religious duties as they were in the discharge of the offices of civil life. What a sacred pair! They made their duty to God, to their neighbour, and to themselves, walk constantly hand in hand.

7. *Both were now well stricken in years*—By the order of God, sterility and old age both met in the person of Elisabeth, to render the birth of a son, humanly speaking, impossible. This was an exact parallel to the case of Sarah and Abraham. Christ

must, by the miraculous power of God, be born of a virgin; whatever was connected with, or referred to, his incarnation must be miraculous and impressive. Isaac was his grand type, and therefore must be born miraculously, contrary to the common course and rule of nature: Abraham was a hundred years of age; Sarah was ninety; and "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women;" and therefore, from her age and state, the birth of a child must, according to nature, have been impossible; and it was thus, that it might be miraculous. John the Baptist was to be the forerunner of Christ; his birth, like that of Isaac, must be miraculous, because, like the other, it was to be a representation of the birth of Christ; therefore his parents were both far advanced in years; and besides, Elisabeth was naturally barren. The birth of these three extraordinary persons was announced nearly in the same way: God himself foretells the birth of Isaac, Gen. xvii. 16; the angel of the Lord announces the birth of John the Baptist; and, six months after, the angel Gabriel, the same angel, proclaims to Mary the birth of Christ! Man is naturally an inconsiderate and incredulous creature; he must have extraordinary things to arrest and fix his attention; and he requires well-attested miracles from God, to bespeak and confirm his faith. Every person who has properly considered the nature of man must see that the whole of natural religion, so termed, is little else than a disbelief of all religion.

8. *Multitude of the people were praying*—The incense was itself an emblem of the prayers and praises of the people of God. While, therefore, the rite is performing by the priest, the people are employed in the thing signified. Happy the people who attend to the spirit as well as the letter of every divine institution! Incense was burnt twice a day in the temple, in the morning and in the evening; but the Evangelist does not specify the time of the day in which this transaction took place. It was probably in the morning.

9. *Appeared unto him an angel of the Lord*—There had been neither prophecy nor angelic ministry vouchsafed to this people for about four hundred years. But now, as the Sun of Righteousness is about to arise upon them, the Day-Spring from on high

visits them, that they may be prepared for that kingdom of God which was at hand. Every circumstance here is worthy of remark: (1.) That an angel should now appear, as such a favour had not been granted for four hundred years. (2.) The person to whom this angel was sent,—one of the priests. The sacerdotal office itself pointed out the Son of God till he came: By him it was to be completed, and in him it was to be eternally established: "Thou art a Priest for ever." (3.) The place in which the angel appeared,—Jerusalem; out of which "the word of the Lord should go forth," and not at Hebron, in the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias lived, which was the ordinary residence of the priests, where there could have been few witnesses of this interposition of God, and the effects produced by it. (4.) The place where he was when the angel appeared to him,—in the temple, which was the place where God was to be sought; the place of his residence, and a type of the human nature of the blessed Jesus. (5.) The time in which this was done,—the solemn hour of public prayer. God has always promised to be present with those who call upon him. When the people and the priest go hand in hand, and heart with heart, to the house of God, the angel of his presence shall surely accompany them, and God shall appear among them. (6.) The employment of Zacharias when the angel appeared,—he was burning incense, one of the most sacred and mysterious functions of the Levitical priesthood, and which typified the intercession of Christ. (7.) The long-continued and publicly-known dumbness of the priest, who doubted the word thus miraculously sent to him from the Lord; a solemn intimation of what God would do to all those who would not believe in the Lord Jesus. "Every mouth shall be stopped."

10. *Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard*—This probably refers, first, to the frequent prayers which he had offered to God for a son; and, secondly, to those which he had offered for the deliverance and consolation of Israel. "They are all heard;" thou shalt have a son, and Israel shall be saved. If fervent, faithful prayers be not immediately answered, they should not be considered as lost; all such

are heard by the Lord, are registered in heaven, and shall be answered in the most effectual way, and in the best time. Answers to prayer are to be received by faith; but faith should not only accompany prayer while offered on earth, but follow it all its way to the throne of grace, and stay with it before the throne till dismissed with its answer to the waiting soul.

11. *And thou shalt have joy and gladness*—"He will be joy and gladness to thee." A child of prayer and faith is likely to be a source of comfort to his parents. Were proper attention paid to this point, there would be fewer disobedient children in the world; and the number of broken-hearted parents would be lessened. But what can be expected from the majority of matrimonial connexions, connexions begun without the fear of God, and carried on without his love?

12. *And many shall rejoice at his birth*—He shall be the minister of God for good to multitudes, who shall, through his preaching, be turned from the error of their ways, and converted to God their Saviour.

13. *He shall be great in the sight of the Lord*—That is, before Jesus Christ, whose forerunner he shall be; or he shall be a truly great person, for so this form of speech may imply.

14. *Shall be filled with the Holy Ghost*—Shall be divinely designated to this particular office, and qualified for it, "from his mother's womb;" from the instant of his birth. To be filled with the Holy Ghost, implies having the soul influenced, in all its powers, with the illuminating, strengthening, and sanctifying energy of the Spirit.

15. *He shall go before him, Jesus Christ, in the spirit and power of Elias*—He shall resemble Elijah in his retired and austere manner of life, and in his zeal for the truth, reproving even princes for their crimes. It was on these accounts that the prophet Malachi had likened John to this prophet.

16. *To turn the hearts of the fathers*—Gross ignorance had taken place in the hearts of the Jewish people; they needed a divine instructor: John is announced as such; by his preaching and manner of life, all classes among the peo-

ple should be taught the nature of their several places, and the duties respectively incumbent upon them. In these things the greatness of John is pointed out. Nothing is truly great but what is so in the sight of God. John's greatness arose, (1.) From the plenitude of God's Spirit which dwelt in him. (2.) From his continual self-denial, and taking up his cross. (3.) From his ardent zeal to make Christ known. (4.) From his fidelity and courage in rebuking vice. (5.) From the reformation which he was the instrument of effecting among the people; reviving among them the spirit of the patriarchs, and preparing their hearts to receive the Lord Jesus.

17. *To the children*—By a very expressive figure of speech, Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs, are represented here as having their hearts alienated from the Jews, their children, because of their unbelief and disobedience; but that the Baptist should so far succeed in converting them to the Lord their God, that these holy men should again look upon them with delight, and acknowledge them for their children. Some think that by "the children" the Gentiles are meant, and by "the fathers," the Jews.

18. *And the disobedient*—Or "unbelieving," the persons who would no longer credit the predictions of the prophets, relative to the manifestation of the Messiah. Unbelief and disobedience are so intimately connected, that the same word in the sacred writings often serves for both.

SECTION III.—ZACHARIAS STRUCK DUMB.

B. C. 6.

LUKE I. 18—25.

AND Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this?¹ for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel,² that stand in the presence of God; ³ and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb,⁴ and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias,⁵ and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: For he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished,⁶ he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months,⁷ saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

1. *Whereby shall I know this?*—All things are possible to God; no natural impediment can have any power when God has declared he will accomplish his purpose. He has a right to be believed on his own word alone; and it is impious, when we are convinced that it is his word, to demand a sign or pledge for its fulfilment.

2. *I am Gabriel*—"The might of the strong God." An angel with such a name was exceedingly proper for the occasion, as it pointed out that all-prevalent power by which the strong God could accomplish every purpose, and subdue all things to himself.

"His name, the 'Power of God,' indicated the exalted qualities with which his

divine Creator had endowed him ; his standing in the immediate presence, his nearer and more intimate access to the manifested glories of the Majesty of Heaven, showed him to be among the most exalted of the order of angels. To this dignified messenger were the prophecies of Christ revealed to Daniel committed; he announced the conception and birth of Messiah's herald, and of the Christ himself. This indeed was employment for an angel of the highest order, and such as he would feel himself most honoured by. Redemption is the most glorious theme of the loftiest intellects in the universe; of the mental power of the sons of light themselves: 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' Yet how many are there among men who, from pride of intellect alone, disdain this theme! To these Greeks the doctrine of the cross is foolishness; precisely that doctrine which engages so deeply the thoughts and interests of angels! And thus they render those words applicable to themselves, as much so as to the philosophers of Paganism of whom St. Paul is speaking, though on another subject: 'Professing themselves wise, they became fools.'—R. WATSON.

3. *That stand in the presence of God*—This is in allusion to the case of the prime minister of an eastern monarch, who alone has access to his master at all times; and is therefore said, in the eastern phrase, to see the presence, or, to be in the presence. From the allusion, we may conceive the angel Gabriel to be in a state of high favour and trust before God.

4. *And, behold, thou shalt be dumb*—"Silent." The angel immediately explains it, "Thou shalt not be able to speak." Dumbness ordinarily proceeds from a natural imperfection or debility of the organs of speech; in this case there was no natural weakness or unfitness in those organs; but, for his rash and unbelieving speech, silence is imposed upon him by the Lord, and he shall not be able to break it till the power that has silenced him gives him again the permission to speak. Let those who are intemperate in the use of their tongues behold here the severity and mercy of the Lord: Nine months' silence for one intemperate speech! Many, by giving way to the language of unbelief, have lost the lan-

guage of praise and thanksgiving for months, if not years.

5. *And the people waited for Zacharias*—The time spent in burning the incense was probably about half an hour, during which there was a profound silence, as the people stood without engaged in mental prayer. To this there is an allusion in Rev. viii. 1—5. Zacharias had spent not only the time necessary for burning the incense, but also that which the discourse between him and the angel took up.

6. *The days of his ministration were accomplished*—Each family of the priesthood officiated one whole week.

There is something very instructive in the conduct of this priest; had he not loved the service he was engaged in, he might have made the loss of his speech a pretext for immediately quitting it. But as he was not thereby disabled from fulfilling the sacerdotal functions, so he saw he was bound to continue till his ministry was ended, or till God had given him a positive dismissal. Preachers who give up their labour in the vineyard because of some trifling bodily disorder by which they are afflicted, or through some inconvenience in outward circumstances, which the follower of a cross-bearing, crucified Lord should not mention, show that they either never had a proper concern for the honour of their Master, or for the salvation of men; or else that they have lost the spirit of their Master, and the spirit of their work. Again: Zacharias did not hasten to his house to tell his wife the good news that he had received from heaven, in which she was certainly very much interested: The angel had promised that all his words should be fulfilled in their season; and for this season he patiently waited in the path of duty. He had engaged in the work of the Lord, and must pay no attention to any thing that was likely to mar or interrupt his religious service. Preachers who profess to be called of God, to labour in the word and doctrine, and who abandon their work for filthy lucre's sake, are the most contemptible of mortals, and traitors to their God.

7. *And hid herself five months*—That she might have the fullest proof of the accomplishment of God's promise before she appeared in public, or spoke of her mercies.

SECTION IV.—THE ANNUNCIATION.

B. C. 5.

LUKE I. 26—38.

AND in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused¹ to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: Blessed *art* thou among women. And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: For thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great,² and shall be called the Son of the Highest: And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob³ for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?⁴ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth,⁵ she hath also conceived a son⁶ in her old age: And this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.⁷ For with God nothing shall be impossible.⁸ And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord;⁹ be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

1. *To a virgin espoused*—"At length the moment is come which is to give a Son to a virgin, a Saviour to the world, a Pattern to mankind, a Sacrifice to sinners, a Temple to the Divinity, and a new principle to the new world. This angel is sent from God, not to the palaces of the great, but to a poor maid, the wife of a carpenter. The Son of God comes to humble the proud, and to honour poverty, weakness, and contempt. He chooses an obscure place for the mystery which is most glorious to his humanity,—its union with the Divinity; and for that which is most degrading,—his sufferings and death,—he will choose the greatest city! How far are men from such a conduct as this!"

2. *He shall be great*—Behold the greatness of the Man Christ Jesus. (1.) Because that human nature that should be born of the virgin was to be united with the divine nature. (2.) In consequence of this, that human

nature should be called, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the most high God; because God would produce it in her womb without the intervention of man. (3.) He shall be the everlasting Head and Sovereign of his church. (4.) His government and kingdom shall be eternal. Revolutions may destroy the kingdoms of the earth, but the powers and gates of hell and death shall never be able to destroy or injure the kingdom of Christ. His is the only dominion that shall never have an end. The angel seems here to refer to Isaiah ix. 7; xvi. 5; Jer. xxiii. 5; Dan. ii. 44; vii. 14; all which prophecies speak of the glory, extent, and perpetuity of the evangelical kingdom. The kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory, form the endless government of Christ.

"Great in power and authority, in glory and fame, in office and administration; yet not in a civil or worldly sense, as the event

proved. All this is accomplished, however, more gloriously in his spiritual and mediatorial dominion; or, more particularly, our Lord was, in a special and peculiar sense, great in his person, as God and Man united; and hence Isaiah, after he has said, 'For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,' adds, 'And his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father.' Great in his prophetic office: In his doctrine and miracles, 'mighty in word and deed.' In his priesthood: As offering the universal sacrifice for the sin of the whole world, not to be repeated, and establishing upon its merit a constant, ever prevalent, and universal intercession. And great as the King of kings, and Lord of lords: To whom 'all power is given in heaven and earth,' and 'of whose kingdom there is no end.'—R. WATSON.

"That glorious Person who dwelleth with the Father and the Spirit, in all the splendour of his unapproachable magnificence, that eternal Word who was with God in the beginning, who is over all, God blessed for ever; that Holy One who is enshrined in the sanctuary of heaven, yet fills the temple of the universe; that glorious Person who formed us from the dust, hath assumed our nature, and made an atonement for our sins: He put off his robes of light, and was enwrapped in the garment of mortality, that we might be arrayed in vestments incorruptible; he veiled the coruscations of his glory, and suffered a temporary eclipse, that we might shine for ever in the blaze of his divinity; he hung upon a cross, the substitute of guilty, condemned criminals; he drank the very dregs of that cup which we never could have emptied; he died that we might live."—H. S. BOYD.

3. *He shall reign over the house of Jacob*—All who belong to the twelve tribes, the whole Israelitish people.

4. *How shall this be, seeing I know not a*

man?—Or, "husband." As she was only contracted to Joseph, and not as yet married, she knew that this conception could not have yet taken place; and she modestly inquires by what means the promise of the angel is to be fulfilled, in order to regulate her conduct accordingly.

5. *And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth*—"Thy kinswoman." As Elisabeth was of the tribe of Levi, and Mary of the tribe of Judah, they could not be relatives but by the mother's side.

6. *She hath also conceived a son*—And this is wrought by the same power and energy through which thou shalt conceive. Thus God has given thee a proof and pledge, in what he has done for Elisabeth, of what he will do for thyself; therefore have faith in God.

7. *With her, who was called barren*—It is possible that Elisabeth got this appellation by way of reproach, or to distinguish her from some other Elisabeth also well known, who had been blessed with children.

8. *With God nothing shall be impossible*—Words of the very same import with those spoken by the Lord to Sarah, when he foretold the birth of Isaac: "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" As there can be no doubt that Mary perceived this allusion to the promise and birth of Isaac, so she must have had her faith considerably strengthened by reflecting on the intervention of God in that case.

9. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*—I fully credit what thou sayest, and am perfectly ready to obey thy commands, and to accomplish all the purposes of thy grace concerning me. It appears that, at the instant of this act of faith and purposed obedience, the conception of the immaculate humanity of Jesus took place: "And it was done unto her according to his word."

SECTION V.—MARY'S VISIT TO ELISABETH.

B. C. 5.

LUKE I. 39—56.

AND Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when

Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed *is* she that believed: For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.¹ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,² and my spirit hath rejoiced³ in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded⁴ the low estate of his handmaiden: For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.⁵ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;⁶ and holy *is* his name. And his mercy *is* on them that fear him⁷ from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.⁸ He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats,⁹ and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.¹⁰ He hath holpen his servant Israel,¹¹ in remembrance of *his* mercy;¹² as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

1. *Blessed is she that believed: For there shall be a performance of those things, &c.*—Or, “Blessed is she who hath believed that there shall be,” &c. This I believe to be the proper arrangement of the passage, and is thus noticed in the marginal reading. Faith is here represented as the foundation of true happiness, because it receives the fulfilment of God’s promises. Whatever God has promised he intends to perform. We should believe whatever he has spoken; his own authority is a sufficient reason why we should believe. Let us only be convinced that God has given the promise, and then implicit faith becomes an indispensable duty; in this case, not to believe implicitly would be absurd and unreasonable. God will perform his promise, for he cannot lie.

2. *My soul doth magnify the Lord*—The verb signifies, to celebrate with words, to extol with praises. This is the only way in which God can be magnified, or made great; for, strictly speaking, nothing can be added to God, for he is infinite and eternal; therefore the way to magnify him is to show forth and celebrate those

acts in which he has manifested his greatness.

3. *And my spirit hath rejoiced*—“Exulted.” These words are uncommonly emphatical; they show that Mary’s whole soul was filled with the divine influence, and wrapt up in God.

4. *For he hath regarded*—“Looked favourably.” In the most tender and compassionate manner he has visited me in my humiliation, drawing the reasons of his conduct, not from any excellence in me, but from his own eternal kindness and love.

5. *All generations shall call me blessed*—This was the character by which alone she wished to be known, namely, the blessed or happy virgin. What dishonour do those do to this holy woman who give her names and characters which her pure soul would abhor, and which properly belong to God her Saviour! By her votaries she is addressed as “Queen of Heaven,” “Mother of God,” &c., titles both absurd and blasphemous.

6. *Hath done to me great things*—As God fills her with his goodness, she emp.

ties herself to him in praises; and, sinking into her own nothingness, she ever confesses that God alone is all in all.

7. *And his mercy is on them that fear him*—His exuberant kindness manifests itself in acts of mercy to all those who fear or reverence his name; and this is continued from generation to generation, because he is abundant in goodness, and because he delighteth in mercy. This is a noble, becoming, and just character of the God of the Christians; a Being who delights in the salvation and happiness of all his creatures; because his name is mercy and his nature love.

8. *He hath scattered the proud, &c.*—While they are forming their insolent, proud, and oppressive projects, laying their plans, and imagining that accomplishment and success are waiting at their right hand, the whirlwind of God's displeasure blows, and they and their machinations are dissipated together.

9. *Put down the mighty from their seats*—Or, "He hath taken down potentates from their thrones." This probably alludes to the removal of Saul from the throne of Israel, and the establishment of the kingdom in the person and family of David. And as Mary spoke prophetically, this saying may also allude to the destruction of the kingdom of satan and his allies, and the final prevalence of the kingdom of Christ.

10. *The rich he hath sent empty away*—God is here represented under the notion of a person of unbounded benevolence, who is daily feeding multitudes at his gates. The poor and the rich are equally dependent upon him; to the one he gives his affluence for a season, and to the other his daily bread. The poor man comes, through a sense of his want, to get his daily support, and God feeds him; the rich man comes through the lust of gain, to get more added to his abundance, and God sends him empty away; not only gives him nothing more, but often deprives him of that which he has, because he has not improved it to the honour of the Giver. There is an allusion here, as in several other parts of this song, to the case of Hannah and Peninnah, 1 Sam. i. 2, &c.; ii. 1—10.

11. *He hath holpen, supported, his servant Israel*—Israel is here represented as falling, and the Lord comes speedily in and props him up. The house of David was now ready to fall and rise no more; Jesus, being born of the very last branch of the regal line, revived the family, and restored the dominion.

12. *In remembrance of his mercy*—By "mercy," the covenant which God made with Abraham, Gen. xv. 18, is intended; which covenant proceeded from God's eternal mercy; as in it salvation was promised to all the nations of the earth.

SECTION VI.—THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

B. C. 5.

LUKE I. 57—66.

Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.¹ And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; ² and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.³ And fear

came on all that dwelt round about ⁴ them : and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa. And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be ! ⁵ And the hand of the Lord was with him. ⁶

1. *And they rejoiced with her*—Because sterility was a reproach ; and they now rejoiced with their relative, from whom that reproach was now rolled away. To rejoice with those whom God has favoured, and to congratulate them on the advantages which he has granted to them, is a duty which humanity, charity, and religion call upon us to fulfil.

(1.) It is a duty of humanity, which should be punctually performed. We are all members of each other, and should rejoice in the welfare of the whole. He who rejoices in his neighbour's prosperity increases his neighbour's happiness, and gets an addition to his own.

(2.) It is a duty which charity or brotherly love requires us to perform with sincerity. In the polite world, there is no duty better fulfilled in word than this is ; but sincerity is utterly banished, and the giver and receiver are both convinced that compliments and good wishes mean—nothing. He who does not endeavour to take a sincere part in his neighbour's prosperity will soon feel ample punishment in the spirit of jealousy and envy.

(3.) It is a duty of religion, which should be fulfilled with piety. These neighbours and relatives saw that God had magnified his mercy towards Elisabeth, and they acknowledged his hand in the work. God is the dispenser of all good : He distributes his favours in mercy, judgment, and justice. Let us honour him in his gifts ; and honour those, for his sake, who are objects of his favour. The society of believers are but one body ; the talents, &c., of every individual are profitable to the whole community ; at least none are deprived of a share in the general welfare, but those who, through jealousy or envy, refuse to rejoice with him towards whom God hath magnified his mercy.

2. *They came to circumcise the child*—Had circumcision been essential to an infant's salvation, God would not have ordered it to be delayed to the eighth day,

because, in all countries, multitudes die before they arrive at that age. Baptism, which is generally allowed to have been substituted for circumcision, is no more necessary to the salvation of an infant than circumcision was. Both are signs of the covenant ;—circumcision, of the putting away of the impurity of the flesh ; and baptism, of the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, producing the answer of a good conscience towards God.

3. *And he spake, and praised God*—In his nine months' silence, he had learned the proper use of his tongue ; and God, whose power was discredited by it, is now magnified. Happy they who, in religious matters, only break silence in order to speak of the loving-kindness of the Lord !

4. *Fear came on all that dwelt round about*—The inhabitants of Hebron and its environs, who were well acquainted with the circumstances of Zacharias and Elisabeth, perceived that God had in a remarkable manner visited them ; and this begot in their minds a more than ordinary reverence for the Supreme Being. Thus the salvation of one often becomes an instrument of good to the souls of many. The inhabitants of this hill country seem to have been an open, honest-hearted, generous people ; who were easily led to acknowledge the interposition of God, and to rejoice in the comfort and welfare of each other. The people of the country are more remarkable for these qualities than those in towns and cities. The latter, through that evil communication which corrupts good manners, are generally profligate, selfish, regardless of God, and inattentive to the operation of his hands.

5. *What manner of child shall this be*—As there have been so many extraordinary things in his conception and birth, surely God has designed him for some extraordinary purpose. These things they laid up in their heart, patiently waiting to see what God would work.

6. *The hand of the Lord was with him*

—God defended and prospered him in all things, and the prophetic Spirit began to rest upon him.

“So true are the promises of God, and so certainly will the full accomplishment of them another day shame our suspicious, unbelieving hearts, and awaken the tongues of his servants to songs of praise! Happy the souls who, by a lively faith in them, are

anticipating that blessed day, and whose minds, kept in tune by these pleasing views, are opening themselves to the most tender sympathy with others, and, like the kindred of this pious pair, are making the religious joys of others their own; so sharing, rather than envying, the superior favours bestowed upon them.”
—DODDRIDGE.

SECTION VII.—THE PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS.

B. C. 5.

LUKE I. 67—80.

AND his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied,¹ saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;² for he hath visited and redeemed his people,³ and hath raised up an horn of salvation⁴ for us in the house of his servant David;⁵ as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies,⁶ and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies⁷ might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;⁸ to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew,⁹ and waxed strong in spirit,¹⁰ and was in the deserts¹¹ till the day of his shewing¹² unto Israel.

1. *Filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied*—The word prophesy is to be taken here in its proper acceptation, for the predicting or foretelling future events. Zacharias speaks, not only of what God had already done, but also of what he was about to do, in order to save a lost world.

2. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*—Zacharias praises God for two grand benefits which he had granted to his people. (1.) He has visited them. (2.) He has ransomed them. (1.) He speaks by the Spirit of prophecy, which calls things

that are not, as though they were; because they are absolutely determined by the Most High, and shall be all fulfilled in their season. God visits his people in the incarnation of Jesus Christ; therefore this Christ is called by him, Jehovah the God of Israel. Here the highest and most glorious character of the Supreme Being is given to Christ. (2.) This God redeems his people: It is for this end that he visits them. His soul is about to be made a sacrifice for sin: He becomes flesh, that he may suffer and die for the sin of the

world. God, by taking upon him the nature of man, has redeemed that nature from eternal ruin.

3. *He hath visited and redeemed his people*—Sinners are fallen into the hands of their enemies, and are captives to sin and death. Jesus ransoms them by his own blood, and restores them to life, liberty, and happiness. This truth the whole Bible teaches: This truth God has shown in certain measures, even to those nations who have not been favoured with the light of his written word: For Christ is that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.

4. *Hath raised up an horn of salvation*—The Lord Jesus gives a luminous, powerful, prevalent, glorious, and abundant salvation or refuge to mankind.

5. *In the house of his servant David*—In verse 32, the angel states, that Mary was of the family of David; and Zacharias, who, from the nature of his office, must have been well acquainted with the public genealogical tables, attests the same thing. This is a matter of considerable importance; because it shows forth the truth of all the prophetic declarations, which uniformly state that the Messiah should come from the family and sit on the throne of David.

6. *We should be saved from our enemies*—As Zacharias spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the salvation which he mentions here must necessarily be understood in a spiritual sense. Satan, death, and sin are the enemies from whom Jesus came to deliver us. Sin is the most dangerous of all, and is properly the only enemy we have to fear. Satan is without us, and can have no power over us, but what he gets through sin. Death is only in our flesh, and shall be finally destroyed (as it affects us) on the morning of the resurrection. Jesus redeems from sin; this is the grand, the glorious, the important victory. Let us get sin cast out, and then we need fear neither death nor the devil.

7. *Being delivered out of the hands of our enemies*—The salvation brought by Jesus Christ consists in the following things:—

(1.) We are to be “delivered out of the hand of our enemies, and from all that hate

us;” so that sin shall neither have dominion over us, nor existence in us.

(2.) We are to worship God, to render him that service and adoration which the letter and spirit of his religion require.

(3.) We are to live in “holiness,” a strict inward conformity to the mind of Christ; and “righteousness,” a full outward conformity to the precepts of the gospel.

(4.) This is to be done before God, under the continual influence and support of his grace, and with a constant evidence of his presence and approbation.

(5.) This state is a state of true happiness; it is “without fear.” Sin is all cast out, holiness is brought in; God’s power upholds, and his approbation cheers and comforts, the believing heart. Thus misery is precluded, and happiness established.

(6.) This blessedness is to continue as long as we exist; “all the days of our life,” in all ages, in all situations, and in all circumstances. What a pity to have lived so long without God in the world, when so much happiness and glory are to be enjoyed in union with him!

8. *To prepare his ways*—Zacharias proclaims the dignity, employment, doctrine, and success of his son; and the ruin and recovery of the Jews and the Gentiles.

(1.) His dignity: “Thou shalt be called” (constituted) “a prophet of the Most High.” Prophet has two acceptations:—(i.) A person who foretels future events; and, (ii.) A teacher of men in the things of God. John was a prophet in both senses: He proclaimed the mercy which should be communicated; announced the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and taught men how to leave their sins, and how to find the salvation of God. His very name, *Jehochanan*, “the grace or mercy of Jehovah,” was a constant prediction of the salvation of God. Our Lord terms him the greatest prophet which had ever appeared in the world. He had the honour of being the last and clearest prophet of the old covenant, and the first of the new.

(2.) His employment: “Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” He should be the immediate forerunner of Jesus Christ, none being capable of succeeding him in his ministry but Christ himself. He was to prepare his ways, to be the honoured instrument, in

the hands of God, of disposing the hearts of multitudes of the Israelites to believe in and follow the Lord Jesus.

(3.) Zacharias points out the doctrine or teaching of John. It should be the science of salvation. Men are ignorant, and they must be instructed. Human sciences may be profitable in earthly matters, but cannot profit the soul. The science that teaches God must come from God. No science is of any avail to the soul that does not bring salvation with it: This is the excellence of heavenly science, and an excellence that is peculiar to itself. No science but that which comes from God can ever save a soul from the power, the guilt, and the pollution of sin.

(4.) Zacharias predicts the success of his son's ministry. Under his preaching, the people should be directed to that tender mercy of God, through which they might obtain the remission of their sins. Those who are sent by God, and preach his truth, and his only, shall always be successful in their work; for it is for this very purpose that God has sent them; and it would be a marvellous thing indeed, should they labour in vain. But there never was such a case, since God made man, in which a preacher was divinely commissioned to preach Jesus and his salvation, and yet had no fruit of his labour.

(5.) Zacharias points out the wretched state in which the inhabitants of Judea and the Gentile world were then found. (i.) Their feet had wandered out of the way of peace, of temporal and spiritual

prosperity. (ii.) They had got into a state of darkness—they were blind concerning the things of God, and the things which belonged to their salvation. (iii.) They had become contented inhabitants of this land of intellectual darkness—they had sat down in it, and were not concerned to get out of it. (iv.) They were about to perish in it—death had his dominion there; and his swift approaches to them were now manifested to the prophet by seeing his shadow cast upon them. Ignorance of God and salvation is the shadow of death; and the substance, eternal ruin, is essentially connected with the projected shadow.

(6.) Zacharias proclaims the recovery of a lost world. As the removal of this darkness, and redemption from this death, were now at hand, John is represented as being a day-spring from on high, a morning star, that foretold the speedy approach of the day, and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

9. *And the child grew*—Increased in stature and bodily vigour.

10. *And waxed strong in spirit*—Had his understanding divinely illuminated and confirmed in the truths of God.

11. *And was in the deserts*—The city of Hebron, the circumjacent hill country, and in or near Nazareth.

12. *Till the day of his shewing*—Or “manifestation;” till he was thirty years of age; before which time the law did not permit a man to enter into the public ministry.

SECTION VIII.—THE DIVINITY AND INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

Ante Orbem Conditum.

JOHN I. 1—14.

In the beginning was the Word,¹ and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; ³ and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; ⁴ and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; ⁵ and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.⁶ He

was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man⁷ that cometh into the world.⁸ He was in the world,⁹ and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.¹⁰ He came unto his own,¹¹ and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power¹² to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood,¹³ nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh,¹⁴ and dwelt among us,¹⁵ (and we beheld his glory,¹⁶ the glory as of the only begotten¹⁷ of the Father,) full of grace and truth.¹⁸

1. *In the beginning was the Word*—That is, before any thing was formed—ere God began the great work of creation. This is the meaning of the word in Genesis i. 1, to which the evangelist evidently alludes. This phrase fully proves, in the mouth of an inspired writer, that Jesus Christ was no part of the creation, as he existed when no part of that existed; and that, consequently, he is no creature, as all created nature was formed by him: For “without him was nothing made that is made.” Now, as what was before creation must be eternal, and, as what gave being to all things could not have borrowed or derived its being from any thing, therefore Jesus, who was before all things and who made all things, must necessarily be the eternal God.

2. *And the Word was God*—Or, “God was the Logos:”—Therefore no subordinate being, no second to the Most High, but the supreme eternal Jehovah.

3. *All things were made by him*—That is, by this Logos. In Genesis i. 1, God is said to have created all things: In this verse, Christ is said to have created all things: The same unerring Spirit spoke in Moses and in the evangelists: Therefore, Christ and the Father are one. To say that Christ made all things by a delegated power from God, is absurd; because the thing is impossible. Creation means causing that to exist that had no previous being: This is evidently a work which can be effected only by Omnipotence. Now, God cannot delegate his omnipotence to another: Were this possible, he to whom this omnipotence was delegated would, in consequence, become God; and he from whom

it was delegated would cease to be such; for it is impossible that there should be two omnipotent beings.

4. *In him was life*—That is, though every thing he made had a principle of life in it, whether vegetable, animal, or intellectual, yet this, that life or animal principle in the human being, was not the light of men; not that light which could guide them to heaven, for “the world by wisdom knew not God.” Therefore, the expression, “In him was life,” is not to be understood of life natural, but of that life eternal which he revealed to the world, to which he taught the way, which he promised to believers, which he purchased for them, which he is appointed to give them, and to which he will raise them up, because he hath the life in himself. All this may be proved: (1.) From the like expressions: “This is the promise that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son:” Whence he is styled, “the true God, and eternal life;” “the resurrection and the life;” “the way, the truth, and the life.” (2.) From these words, John came “to bear witness of this light,” that all might believe through him; namely, to eternal life, for so John witnesseth, iii. 15, 36. And hence it follows, that this life must be the light of men, by giving them the knowledge of this life, and of the way leading to it.

5. *And the light shineth in darkness*—By darkness here may be understood: (1.) The Heathen world. (2.) The Jewish people. (3.) The fallen spirit of man.

6. *That all men through him might believe*—He testified that Jesus was the “true light”—the true Teacher of the way to the

kingdom of glory, and the Lamb or Sacrifice of God, which was to bear away the sin of the world; and invited men to believe in him for the remission of their sins, that they might receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This was bearing the most direct witness to the light which was now shining in the dark wilderness of Judea; and, from thence, shortly to be diffused over the whole world.

7. *The true Light which lighteth every man*—As Christ is the Spring and Fountain of all wisdom, so all the wisdom that is in man comes from him; the human intellect is a ray from his brightness; and reason itself springs from this Logos, the eternal reason.

8. *That cometh into the world*—As the human creature sees the light of the world as soon as it is born, from which it had been excluded while in the womb of its parent; in like manner, this heavenly light shines into the soul of every man, to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and it is through this light, which no man brings into the world with him, but which Christ mercifully gives to him on his coming into it, that what is termed conscience among men is produced. No man could discern good from evil, were it not for this light thus supernaturally and graciously restored. There was much light in the law, but this shone only upon the Jews; but the superior light of the gospel is to be diffused over the face of the whole earth.

9. *He was in the world*—From its very commencement, he governed the universe, regulated his church, spake by his prophets, and often, as the angel or messenger of Jehovah, appeared to them, and to the patriarchs.

10. *And the world knew him not*—“Did not acknowledge him;” for the Jewish rulers knew well enough, that he was a Teacher come from God; but they did not choose to acknowledge him as such. Men love the world, and this love hinders them from knowing him who made it, though he made it only to make himself known. Christ, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things are continually supported, has way every where, is continually manifesting himself by his providence and by his grace, and

yet the foolish heart of man regardeth it not!

11. *He came unto his own*—To those of his own family, city, country; and his own people, his own citizens, brethren, subjects.

To receive Christ is to acknowledge him as the promised Messiah; to believe in him as the Victim that bears away the sin of the world; to obey his gospel, and to become a partaker of his holiness, without which no man, on the gospel plan, can ever see God.

12. *To them gave he power*—“Privilege, honour, dignity, or right.” He who is made a child of God enjoys the greatest privilege which the Divine Being can confer on this side eternity. Those who accept Jesus Christ, as he is offered to them in the gospel, have, through his blood, a right to this sonship; for by that sacrifice this blessing was purchased; and the fullest promises of God confirm it to all who believe. And those who are engrafted in the heavenly family have the highest honour and dignity to which it is possible for a human soul to arrive. What an astonishing thought is this! The sinner, who was an heir to all God’s curses, has, through the sacrifice of Jesus, a claim on the mercy of the Most High, and a right to be saved! Even justice itself, on the ground of its holy and eternal nature, gives salvation to the vilest who take refuge in this atonement; for justice has nothing to grant, or heaven to give, which the blood of the Son of God has not merited.

13. *Which were born, who were regenerated, not of bloods*—The union of father and mother, or of a distinguished or illustrious ancestry; for the Hebrew language makes use of the plural to point out the dignity or excellence of a thing; and, probably, by this the evangelist intended to show his countrymen, that having Abraham and Sarah for their parents would not entitle them to the blessings of the new covenant; as no man could lay claim to them, but in consequence of being born of God; therefore, neither “the will of the flesh;” any thing that the corrupt heart of man could purpose or determine in its own behalf; nor “the will of man;” any thing that another may be disposed to do in our behalf, can avail here; this new birth must come through the

"will of God;" through his own unlimited power and boundless mercy, prescribing salvation by Christ Jesus alone. It has been already observed that the Jews required circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice, in order to make a proselyte. They allow that the Israelites had in Egypt cast off circumcision, and were consequently out of the covenant; but at length they were circumcised, and they mingled the blood of circumcision with the blood of the paschal lamb, and from this union of *bloods* they were again made the children of God. This was the only way by which the Jews could be made the sons of God; but the evangelist shows them that, under the gospel dispensation, no person could become a child of God, but by being spiritually regenerated.

4. *And the Word was made flesh*—That very Person who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God, in the fullness of time became flesh; became incarnated by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin. Allowing this apostle to have written by divine inspiration, is not this verse, taken in connexion with verse 1, an absolute and incontestable proof of the proper and eternal Godhead of Christ Jesus?

15. *And dwelt among us*—"And tabernacled among us." The human nature which he took of the virgin, being as the shrine, house, or temple, in which his immaculate Deity condescended to dwell. The word is probably an allusion to the Divine Shechinah in the Jewish temple; and, as God has represented the whole gospel dispensation by the types and ceremonies of the old covenant, so the Shechinah in the tabernacle and temple pointed out this manifestation of God in the flesh. The word is thus used by the Jewish writers: It signifies with them a manifestation of the Divine Shechinah.

The doctrine of vicarious sacrifice and the incarnation of the Deity have prevailed among the most ancient nations in the world, and even among those which were not favoured with the letter of divine revelation.

16. *We beheld his glory*—This refers to the transfiguration, at which John was present, in company with Peter and James.

17. *The glory as of the only begotten*—That is, such a glory as became, or was proper to, the Son of God. There is also here an allusion to the manifestations of God above the ark in the tabernacle; and this connects itself with the first clause, "he tabernacled," or fixed his tent, "among us." While God dwelt in the tabernacle, among the Jews, the priests saw his glory; and while Jesus dwelt among men his glory was manifested in his gracious words and miraculous acts.

18. *Full of grace and truth*—Full of favour, kindness, and mercy to men; teaching the way to the kingdom of God, with all the simplicity, plainness, dignity, and energy of truth.

"(1.) The Son of God assumed our nature; that is, he took a human soul, and a human body, into personal subsistence. (2.) This human nature never had a personality of its own; in the very instant in which it was created, the hypostatical union took place. Thus, the human nature of Christ became as truly his own as the divine nature was his own. (3.) The two natures were preserved distinct, but not separate: They were united, but not blended so as to produce a mixed or third nature. (4.) By the communion which flowed from the conjunction of the two natures, the divine stamped an infinite dignity and value upon all which was performed by the human. But it did not change the essential properties of the human, nor were its own changed. The one continued infinite, the other finite. (5.) As each nature was the true and proper nature of Christ, whatever was achieved or sustained in the one nature or the other was achieved and sustained by the person of Christ. Thus, the complete mediatorial work, all that he did, and all that he suffered, whether in the one nature or in the other, was the work of the whole Christ, the work of that mysterious Being, who is both God and man in one person."—H. S. BOYD.

SECTION IX.—AN ANGEL APPEARS TO JOSEPH.

B. C. 5.

MATTHEW I. 18—25.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,¹ before they came together, she was found with child² of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: For he shall save his people from their sins.³ Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child,⁴ and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: And he called his name JESUS.

1. *Espoused to Joseph*—Refers to the previous marriage agreement, in which the parties mutually bound themselves to each other; without which, no woman was ever married among the Jews.

Among the Jews the espousal, though the marriage had not been consummated, was considered as perfectly legal and binding on both sides; and hence, a breach of this contract was considered as a case of adultery, and punished exactly in the same way.

2. *She was found with child*—Her situation was the most distressing and humiliating that can be conceived. Nothing but the fullest consciousness of her own integrity, and the strongest confidence in God, could have supported her in such trying circumstances, where her reputation, her honour, and her life, were at stake. What conversation passed between her and Joseph on this discovery, we are not informed; but the issue proves that it was not satisfactory to him; nor could he resolve to consider her as his wife, till God had sent his angel to bear the most unequivocal testimony to the virgin's innocence.

3. *He shall save his people from their sins*—This shall be his great business in the

world, the great errand on which he is come, namely, to make an atonement for, and to destroy, sin. Deliverance from all the power, guilt, and pollution of sin, is the privilege of every believer in Christ Jesus. Less than this is not spoken of in the gospel; and less than this would be unbecoming the gospel. The perfection of the gospel system is not that it makes allowances for sin, but that it makes an atonement for it; not that it tolerates sin, but that it destroys it.

4. *Behold, a virgin shall be with child*—This prophecy is taken from Isaiah vii. 14. This, also, is in perfect agreement with the ancient prophecy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Gen. iii. 15; for the person who was to destroy the work of the devil was to be the progeny of the woman, without any concurrence of the man. And, hence, the text in Genesis speaks as fully of the virgin state of the person from whom Christ, according to the flesh, should come, as that in the prophet, or this in the evangelist. According to the original promise, there was to be a seed, a human being, who should destroy sin; but this seed, or human being, must come from the woman alone

and no woman alone could produce such a human being without being a virgin. Hence, "a virgin shall bear a son," is the very spirit and meaning of the original text, independently of the illustration given by the prophet; and the fact recorded by the evangelist is the proof of the whole. "But how could that be a sign to Ahaz, which was to take place so many hundreds of years after?" I answer, The meaning of the prophet is plain: Not only Rezin and Pekah should be unsuccessful against Jerusalem at that time, which was the fact; but Jerusalem, Judea, and the house of David, should be both preserved,—notwithstanding their depressed state, and the multitude of their adversaries,—till the time should come when a virgin should bear a son. This is a most remarkable circumstance,—the house of David could never fail till a virgin should conceive and bear a son: Nor did it. But when that incredible and miraculous fact did take place, the kingdom and house of David became extinct! This is an irrefragable confutation of every argument a Jew can offer in vindication of his opposition to the gospel of Christ. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled, or the kingdom and house of David are yet standing. But the kingdom of David, we know, is destroyed; and where is the man—Jew or Gentile—that can show us a single descendant of David on the face of the earth? The prophecy could not fail; the kingdom and house of David have failed. The virgin, therefore, must have brought

forth her Son, and this Son is Jesus the Christ. Thus Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew concur; and facts, the most unequivocal, have confirmed the whole. Behold the wisdom and providence of God

Notwithstanding what has been said above, it may be asked, "In what sense could this name, Immanuel, be applied to Jesus Christ, if he be not truly and properly God? Could the Spirit of truth ever design that Christians should receive him as an angel or a mere man, and yet, in the very beginning of the gospel history, apply a character to him which belongs only to the most high God?" Surely no. In what sense, then, is Christ "God with us?" Jesus is called Immanuel, or, "God with us," in his incarnation: God united to our nature; God with man; God in man; "God with us," by his continual protection; "God with us," by the influences of his Holy Spirit, in the holy sacrament, in the preaching of his word, in private prayer; and "God with us," through every action of our life that we begin, continue, and end in his name. He is "God with us," to comfort, enlighten, protect, and defend us in every time of temptation and trial, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment: And "God with us," and in us; and we with and in him, to all eternity.

"This is that mystery which the angels desire to look into; that miracle of miracles before whose superior blaze all other wonders vanish; in the light of whose glory, creation's works are lost."—H. S. BOYD.

SECTION X.—THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST BY HIS FATHER JOSEPH.

B. C. 5.

MATTHEW I. 1—17.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ,¹ the son of David, the son of Abraham;² Abraham begat Isaac;³ and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara⁴ of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife of Urias*; and Solomon begat

Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; and Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;⁵ and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; and Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; and Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Elcazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.⁶ So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon, *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ, *are* fourteen generations.

1. *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ*—I suppose these words to have been the original title to this Gospel; and that they signify, not only the account of the genealogy of Christ, as detailed below, but the history of his birth, acts, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension.

2. *The son of David, the son of Abraham*—No person ever born could boast, in a direct line, a more illustrious ancestry than Jesus Christ. Among his progenitors, the regal, sacerdotal, and prophetic offices existed in all their glory and splendour. David, the most renowned of sovereigns, was king and prophet. Abraham, the most perfect character in all antiquity, whether sacred or profane, was priest and prophet. But the three offices were never united except in the person of Christ; he alone was Prophet, Priest, and King; and possessed and executed these offices in such a super-eminent degree, as no human being ever did, or ever could do. As the principal business of the prophet was to make known the will of God to men, according to certain partial communications received from heaven; so Jesus, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who was intimately and thoroughly acquainted with all the mysteries of the eternal world, came to declare the divine nature and its counsels to mankind. As the business of the priest

was to offer sacrifices to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people; so Christ was constituted a High Priest, to make, by the sacrifice of himself, an atonement for the sins of the whole world. As the office of king was to reign over, protect, and defend the people committed to his care by the divine providence; so Christ is set as a King upon Sion, having the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; of the righteousness, peace, and increase of whose government there shall be no end. This threefold office Christ executes, not only in a general sense, in the world at large; but in a particular sense, in every Christian soul. He is first a Prophet, to teach the heart of man the will of God; to convict the conscience of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and fully to illustrate the way of salvation. He is next a Priest, to apply that atonement to the guilty conscience, the necessity of which, as a Prophet, he had previously made known. And lastly, as a King, he leads captivity captive, binds and casts out the strong man armed, spoils his goods, extends the sway of the sceptre of righteousness, subdues and destroys sin, and reigns Lord over all the powers and faculties of the human soul; so that "as sin reigned unto death, even so does grace reign through righteous-

ness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is remarkable that the evangelist names David before Abraham, though the latter was many generations older. The reason seems to be this, that David was not only the most illustrious of our Lord's predecessors, as being both king and prophet; but because that promise which at first was given to Abraham, and afterwards, through successive generations, confirmed to the Jewish people, was at last determined and restricted to the family of David. "Son of David," was an epithet by which the Messiah was afterwards known among the Jews; and under this title they were led to expect him by prophetic authority.

3. *Abraham begat Isaac*.—In this genealogy, those persons only among the ancestors of Christ which formed the direct line, are specified; hence no mention is made of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, nor of Esau, the son of Isaac; and of all the twelve patriarchs, or sons of Jacob, Judah alone is mentioned.

4. *Phares and Zara*.—The remarkable history of these twins may be seen, Genesis xxxviii.

5. *Joram begat Ozias*.—This is the Uzziah, king of Judah, who was struck with the leprosy for his presumption in entering the temple to offer incense before the Lord. Ozias was not the immediate son of Joram; there were three kings between them, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, which swell the fourteen generations to seventeen; but it is observed that omissions of this kind are not uncommon in the Jewish genealogies. This circumstance the evangelist was probably aware of, but did not see it proper to attempt to correct what he found in the public accredited genealogical tables; as he knew it to be of no consequence to his argument, which was merely to show that Jesus Christ as surely descended in an uninterrupted line from David, as David did from Abraham. And this he has done in the most satisfactory manner; nor did any person in those days pretend to detect any inaccuracy in his statement, though the account was published among those very people whose interest it was to expose the fallacy, in vindication of their own obstinate rejection of the Messiah, if any such fallacy could have

been proved. But as they were silent, modern and comparatively modern unbelievers may for ever hold their peace.

6. *Jesus, who is called Christ*.—The word "Christ" signifies, "the anointed," or, "anointer."

It appears from Isaiah lxi. 1, that anointing with oil, in consecrating a person to any important office, whether civil or religious, was considered as an emblem of the communication of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. This ceremony was used on three occasions, namely, the installation of prophets, priests, and kings, into their respective offices. But why should such an anointing be deemed necessary? Because the common sense of men taught them that all good, whether spiritual or secular, must come from God, its origin and cause. Hence it was taken for granted, (1.) That no man could foretell events unless inspired by the Spirit of God. And therefore the prophet was anointed, to signify the communication of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. (2.) That no person could offer an acceptable sacrifice to God, for the sins of men, or profitably minister in holy things, unless enlightened, influenced, and directed by the Spirit of grace and holiness. Hence the priest was anointed, to signify his being divinely qualified for the due performance of his sacred functions. (3.) That no man could enact just and equitable laws, which should have the prosperity of the community and the welfare of the individual continually in view, or could use the power confided to him only for the suppression of vice and the encouragement of virtue, but that man who was ever under the inspiration of the Almighty. Hence kings were inaugurated by anointing with oil. Two of these offices only exist in all civilized nations, the sacerdotal and regal; and, in some countries, the priest and king are still consecrated by anointing. But as no man was ever dignified by holding the three offices, so no person ever had the title *Mashiach*, "the Anointed One," but Jesus, the Christ. He alone is King of kings, and Lord of lords; the King who governs the universe, and rules in the hearts of his followers; the Prophet to instruct men in the way wherein they should go; and the great High Priest, to make atonement for their sins. Hence he is called the *Messias*, "the

Anointed One." Of him, Melchizedek, title of the Messiah, or "the Anointed of Abraham, Aaron, David, and others, were God." This does, and ever will, exclusively illustrious types; but none of these had the belong to Jesus, the Christ.

SECTION XI.—THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST BY HIS MOTHER MARY.

A. D. 26.

LUKE III. 23—38.

AND Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age,¹ being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph,² which was *the son* of Heli, which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Janna, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Amos, which was *the son* of Naum, which was *the son* of Esli, which was *the son* of Nagge, which was *the son* of Maath, which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Semci, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Joanna, which was *the son* of Rhesa, which was *the son* of Zorobabel, which was *the son* of Salathiel, which was *the son* of Neri, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Addi, which was *the son* of Cosam, which was *the son* of Elmodam, which was *the son* of Fr, which was *the son* of Jose, which was *the son* of Eliczer, which was *the son* of Jorim, which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Simeon, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Jonan, which was *the son* of Eliakim, which was *the son* of Melca, which was *the son* of Menan, which was *the son* of Mattatha, which was *the son* of Nathan, which was *the son* of David, which was *the son* of Jesse, which was *the son* of Obed, which was *the son* of Booz, which was *the son* of Salmon, which was *the son* of Naasson, which was *the son* of Aminadab, which was *the son* of Aram, which was *the son* of Esrom, which was *the son* of Phares, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Jacob, which was *the son* of Isaac, which was *the son* of Abraham, which was *the son* of Thara, which was *the son* of Nachor, which was *the son* of Saruch, which was *the son* of Ragau, which was *the son* of Phalec, which was *the son* of Heber, which was *the son* of Sala, which was *the son* of Cainan, which was *the son* of Arphaxad, which was *the son* of Sem, which was *the son* of Noe, which was *the son* of Lamech, which was *the son* of Mathusala, which was *the son* of Enoch, which was *the son* of Jared, which was *the son* of Maleleel, which was *the son* of Cainan, which was *the son* of Enos, which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.

1. *Thirty years of age*—This was the age required by the law, to which the priests must arrive before they could be installed in their office.

2. *Being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph*—That St. Luke does not always speak of sons, properly such, is evident from the first and last person which he names: Jesus Christ was only the supposed son of Joseph, because Joseph was the husband of his mother Mary; and Adam, who is said to be the son of God, was such only by creation. After this observation it is next necessary to consider, that, in the genealogy described by St. Luke, there are two sons improperly such; that is, two sons-in-law, instead of two sons.

As the Hebrews never permitted women to enter into their genealogical tables, whenever a family happened to end with a daughter, instead of naming her in the genealogy, they inserted her husband, as the son of him who was, in reality, but his father-in-law.

Mary, therefore, appears to have been the daughter of Heli. Thus it appears that Jesus, son of Mary, re-united in himself all the blood, privileges, and rights of the whole family of David; in consequence of which he is emphatically called "the Son of David." It is worthy of being remarked, that St. Matthew, who wrote principally for the Jews, extends his genealogy to Abraham, through whom the promise of the Messiah was given to the Jews; but St. Luke, who wrote his history for the instruction of the Gentiles, extends his genealogy to Adam, to whom the promise of the Redeemer was given in behalf of himself and of all his posterity.

Perhaps few questions have occasioned more trouble and perplexity to the learned than that which concerns the genealogy of our blessed Lord, as it is given by the evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke. The tables found in these writers are extremely different, or, as some think, contradictory; but it is worthy of remark, that, while the archives of the Jews remained entire, the accuracy of the evangelists was never called in question. Hence it follows, either that some corruptions have since that time crept into the text, or that the true method of reconciling the seeming inconsistencies was then

better understood. The silence of the enemies of the gospel, both Heathen and Jewish, during even the first century, is itself a sufficient proof that neither inconsistency nor corruption could be then alleged against this part of the evangelical history. If a charge of this nature could have been supported, it unquestionably would have been made. The Jews and Heathens, who agreed in their hostility to the religion of Christ, were equally interested in this subject; and could they have proved that a single flaw existed in these genealogical tables, they might at once have set aside the pretensions of our Lord and his disciples; for, if the lineal descent of Jesus from David were not indisputable, he could not possess the character essential to the Messiah, nor any right to the Jewish throne. If his title, in this respect, were even questionable, it is impossible to suppose that the Jews would have withheld an allegation which must fully vindicate them in denying his Messiahship, and in putting him to death as an impostor. We may confidently assert, therefore, that his regular lineal descent from David could not be disproved, since it was not even disputed at a time when alone it could have been done successfully, and by those persons who were so deeply interested in the event. The sincere believer may consequently be assured, that whatever difficulties appear at present had formerly no existence, and are even now of such a nature as cannot be allowed to shake the faith of any reasonable man. I would not, however, be understood to intimate that these difficulties are now insuperable; on the contrary, I am satisfied that the real difficulties are few, and that these have, for the most part, been satisfactorily explained by most of the evangelical harmonists.

The goodness of God is manifested, not only in his giving his Son to save a lost world, but also in the choice of the persons who were his progenitors; among whom we find, (1.) Saints, to excite our courage: Abraham, remarkable for his faith; Isaac, for his obedience; and Jacob, for his fervour and constancy. (2.) Penitent sinners, to excite our confidence: Such as David, Manasses, &c. (3.) Sinners, of whose repentance and salvation we hear nothing to put us on our guard.

Four women are mentioned in this genealogy: Two of these were adulteresses, Tamar and Bathsheba; and two were Gentiles, Rahab and Ruth, and strangers to the covenant of promise; to teach us that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that, though strangers to his people, we are not on that account excluded from a salvation which God has designed for all men. He is not the God of the Jews only; he is also the God of the Gentiles.

The state of the royal family of David, the circumstances of the holy virgin and her spouse Joseph, the very remarkable

prophecy of Isaiah, the literal and circumstantial fulfilment of it, the names given to our blessed Lord, the genealogical scroll of the family, &c., &c., are all so many proofs of the wisdom, goodness, and providence of God. Every occurrence seems, at first view, to be abandoned to fortuitous influence, and yet the result of each shows that God managed the whole. These circumstances are of the greatest importance; nor can the Christian reader reflect on them without an increase of his faith and his piety.

SECTION XII.—THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

B. C. 5.

LUKE II. 1—20.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David :) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife,¹ being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.² And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.³ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,⁴ and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: And they were sore afraid.⁵ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: For, behold, I bring you good tidings⁶ of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ⁷ the Lord.⁸ And this *shall be* a sign unto you: ⁹ Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host¹⁰ praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest,¹¹ and on earth peace, good will toward men.¹² And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem,¹³ and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph,

and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying¹⁴ which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.¹⁵ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God¹⁶ for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

1. *With Mary his espoused wife*—There was no necessity for Mary to have gone to Bethlehem, as Joseph's presence could have answered the end proposed in the census as well without Mary as with her; but God so ordered it, that the prophecy of Micah should be thus fulfilled, and that Jesus should be born in the city of David.

As multitudes were going now to be enrolled, all the lodgings in the inn had been occupied before Joseph and Mary arrived. An honest man who had worked diligently at his business, under the peculiar blessing of God, as Joseph undoubtedly had, could not have been so destitute of money as not to be able to procure himself and wife a comfortable lodging for a night; and, had he been so ill-fitted for the journey as some unwarrantably imagine, we may take it for granted he would not have brought his wife with him, who was in such a state as not to be exposed to any inconveniences of this kind without imminent danger.

2. *There was no room for them in the inn*—In ancient times, inns were as respectable as they were useful, being fitted up for the reception of travellers alone; now, they are frequently haunts for the idle and the profligate, the drunkard and the infidel; in short, for any kind of guests except Jesus and his genuine followers. To this day there is little room for such in most inns; nor indeed have they, in general, any business in such places.

3. *Keeping watch by night*—"Keeping the watches of the night;" that is, each one keeping a watch (which ordinarily consisted of three hours) in his turn. The reason why they watched them in the field appears to have been, either to preserve the sheep from beasts of prey, such as wolves, foxes, &c., or from freebooting banditti, with which all the land of Judea was at that

time much infested. It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of *Marchesvan*, which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could he have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact, which casts considerable light upon this disputed point.

The time in which Christ was born has been considered a subject of great importance among Christians. However, the matter has been considered of no moment by Him who inspired the evangelists; as not one hint is dropped on the subject, by which it might be possible even to guess nearly to the time, except the chronological fact mentioned above.*

4. *The angel of the Lord came upon them*—Or, "stood over them." It is likely that the angel appeared in the air at some little distance above them, and that from him the rays of the "glory of the Lord shone round about them," as the rays of light are projected from the sun.

5. *They were sore afraid*—Terrified

* Chronologists are now generally agreed that Christ was born about four years before the common era. S. D.

with the appearance of so glorious a being, and probably fearing that he was a messenger of justice, coming to denounce divine judgments, or punish them immediately, for sins with which their consciences would not fail, on such an occasion, to reproach them.

6. *Behold, I bring you good tidings*—I am not come to declare the judgments of the Lord, but his merciful loving-kindness, the subject being a matter of great joy. He then declares his message: "Unto you;" and not to yourselves exclusively, for it is "to all people," to all the inhabitants of this land, and to the inhabitants of the whole earth.

7. *Which is Christ*—"The Anointed." This name points out the Saviour of the world in his prophetic, regal, and sacerdotal offices; as in ancient times prophets, kings, and priests were anointed with oil, when installed into their respective offices. Anointing was the same with them as consecration is with us. Oil is still used in the consecration of kings.

8. *The Lord*—The supreme, eternal Being, the Ruler of the heavens and the earth. It is certain that the Lordship of Christ must be considered in a mere spiritual sense, as he never set up any secular government upon earth, nor commanded any to be established in his name; and there is certainly no spiritual government but that of God; and indeed the word "Lord," in the text, appears to be properly understood when applied to the Deity of Christ. Jesus is a Prophet, to reveal the will of God and instruct men in it. He is a Priest, to offer up sacrifice, and make atonement for the sin of the world. He is Lord, to rule over and rule in the souls of the children of men. In a word, he is Jesus the Saviour, to deliver from the power, guilt, and pollution of sin; to enlarge and vivify, by the influence of his Spirit; to preserve in the possession of the salvation which he has communicated; to seal those who believe, heirs of glory; and at last to receive them into the fulness of beatitude in his eternal joy.

9. *This shall be a sign*, or "token," unto you—"You shall find" this glorious person, however strange it may appear, "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a stable." It is by humility that Christ

comes to reign; and this is the only way into his kingdom. Pride is the character of all the children of Adam; humility, the mark of the Son of God, and of all his followers. Christ came in the way of humility, to destroy that pride which is the root of evil in the souls of men. And thus, according to the old medical aphorism, "Opposites are destroyed by their opposites."

10. *Suddenly there was with the angel, &c.*—This multitude of the heavenly host had just now descended from on high, to honour the new-born Prince of Peace, to give his parents the fullest conviction of his glory and excellence, and to teach the shepherds, who were about to be the first proclaimers of the gospel, what to think and what to speak of him, who, while he appeared as a helpless infant, was the object of worship to the angels of God.

11. *Glory to God in the highest*—The design of God, in the incarnation, was to manifest the hidden glories of his nature, and to reconcile men to each other and to himself. The angels, therefore, declare that this incarnation shall manifest and promote the glory of God, not only in the highest heavens, among the highest orders of beings, but in the highest and most exalted degrees. For in this astonishing display of God's mercy, attributes of the divine nature which had not been, and could not be, known in any other way should be now exhibited in the fulness of their glory, that even the angels should have fresh objects to contemplate, and new glories to exult in. These things the angels desire to look into, and they desire it because they feel they are thus interested in it. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is an infinite and eternal benefit. Heaven and earth both partake of the fruits of it, and through it angels and men become one family.

12. *Peace, good will toward men*—Men are in a state of hostility with heaven and with each other. The carnal mind is enmity against God. He who sins wars against his Maker; and

"Foe to God was ne'er true friend to man."

When men become reconciled to God, through the death of his Son, they love one another. They have peace with God; peace in their own consciences; and peace

with their neighbours. Good will dwells among them, speaks in them, and works by them. Well might this state of salvation be represented under the notion of the kingdom of God, a counterpart of eternal felicity.

"The words teach us, (1.) That the birth of Christ is an event which, above all others, brings glory to God, giving such a display of several of his perfections as had never been made before, particularly of his holiness and justice, in requiring such a sacrifice as was hereby to be prepared for the expiation of human guilt; and his mercy, in providing and accepting it; his wisdom, in devising such a plan for the redemption of lost man; and his power, in executing it. (2.) It brings peace on earth, that is, peace to man; peace with God, through the atonement and mediation of Christ; peace of conscience, as the consequence of knowing that we have peace with God, and peace one with another. (3.) It displays the good-will, the benevolence, the love of God to man, as no other of his works or dispensations ever did or could do."—BENSON.

13. *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem*—Let us go across the country at the nearest, that we may lose no time, that we may speedily see this glorious Reconciler of God and man. All delays are dangerous; but he who delays to seek Jesus, when the angels, the messengers of God, bring him glad tidings of salvation, risks his present safety and his eternal happiness. O what would the damned in hell give for those moments in which the living hear of salvation, had they the same possibility of receiving it! Reader, be wise. Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace; and thereby good will come unto thee. Amen.

14. *They made known abroad the saying*—These shepherds were the first preachers of the gospel of Christ; and what was their text? Why, "Glory to God in the highest heavens," and "on earth, peace, and good will among men." This is the elegant and energetic saying, which comprises the sum and substance of the gospel of God. This, and this only, is the message which all Christ's true pastors or shepherds bring to

men. He who, while he professes the religion of Christ, disturbs society by his preachings or writings, who excludes from the salvation of God all who hold not his religious or political creed, never knew the nature of the gospel, and never felt its power or influence. How can religious contentions, civil broils, or open wars, look that gospel in the face which publishes nothing but "glory to God," and "peace and good will among men?" Crusades for the recovery of a Holy Land, so called, (by the way, latterly, the most unholy in the map of the world,) and wars for the support of religion, are an insult to the gospel, and blasphemy against God!

15. *And pondered them in her heart*—Every circumstance relative to her Son's birth, Mary treasured up in her memory; and every new circumstance she weighed, or compared, with those which had already taken place, in order to acquire the fullest information concerning the nature and mission of her Son.

16. *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God*—These simple men, having satisfactory evidence of the truth of the good tidings, and feeling a divine influence upon their own minds, returned to the care of their flocks, glorifying God for what he had shown them, and for the blessedness which they felt. "Jesus Christ, born of a woman, laid in a stable, proclaimed and ministered to by the heavenly host, should be a subject of frequent contemplation to the pastors of his church. After having compared the predictions of the prophets with the facts stated in the evangelic history, their own souls being hereby confirmed in these sacred truths, they will return to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for what they had seen and heard in the gospel history, just as it had been told them in the writings of the prophets; and, preaching these mysteries with the fullest conviction of their truth, they become instruments in the hands of God of begetting the same faith in their hearers; and thus the glory of God and the happiness of his people are both promoted." What subjects for contemplation!—what matter for praise!

SECTION XIII.—CHRIST ACKNOWLEDGED BY
SIMEON AND ANNA.

B. C. 4.

LUKE II. 21—39.

AND when eight days were accomplished¹ for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification² according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice³ according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.⁴ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem,⁵ whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just⁶ and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: ⁷ And the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him⁸ by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death,⁹ before he had seen the Lord's Christ.¹⁰ And he came by the Spirit into the temple: ¹¹ And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms,¹² and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,¹³ according to thy word: ¹⁴ For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,¹⁵ which thou hast prepared¹⁶ before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles,¹⁷ and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled¹⁸ at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall¹⁹ and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign²⁰ which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,²¹) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.²² And there was one Anna, a prophetess,²³ the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: She was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years²⁴ from her virginity; and she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple,²⁵ but served *God* with fastings²⁶ and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant²⁷ gave thanks likewise²⁸ unto the Lord, and spake of him²⁹ to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.³⁰ And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

1. *When eight days were accomplished*
—The law had appointed that every male should be circumcised at eight days old, or on the eighth day after its birth; and our

blessed Lord received circumcision in token of his subjection to the law.

2. *Days of her purification*—The purification of every mother and child, which

the law enjoined, is a powerful argument in proof of that original corruption and depravity which every human being brings into the world. The woman to be purified was placed in the east gate of the court, called Nicanor's gate, and was there sprinkled with blood: Thus she received the atonement.

3. *And to offer a sacrifice*—Neither mother nor child was considered as in the Lord's covenant, or under the divine protection, till these ceremonies, prescribed by the law, had been performed.

4. *A pair of turtle doves, &c.*—One was for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering: The rich were required to bring a lamb; but the poor and middling classes were required to bring either two turtle doves, or two pigeons. This is a proof that the holy family were not in affluence. Jesus sanctified the state of poverty, which is the general state of man, by passing through it. Therefore "the poor have the gospel preached unto them:" And the poor are they who principally receive it.

Though neither Mary nor her Son needed any of these purifications, for she was immaculate, and He was the Holy One, yet, had she not gone through the days of purification according to the law, she could not have appeared in the public worship of the Most High, and would have been considered as an apostate from the faith of the Israel of God; and had not he been circumcised and publicly presented in the temple, he could not have been permitted to enter either synagogue or temple, and no Jew would have heard him preach, or had any intercourse or connexion with him. These reasons are sufficient to account for the purification of the holy virgin, and for the circumcision of the most holy Jesus.

5. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem*—This man is distinguished because of his singular piety. There can be no doubt that there were many persons in Jerusalem named Simeon, besides this man; but there was none of the name who merited the attention of God so much as he in the text. Such persevering, exemplary piety was very rare, and therefore the inspired penman ushers in the account with, "Behold!"

6. *The same man was just*—He steadily regulated all his conduct by the law of his God. *And devout*—He had fully consecrated himself to God, so that he added a pious heart to a righteous conduct.

7. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel*—That is, the Messiah, who was known among the pious Jews by this character: He was to be the consolation of Israel, because he was to be its redemption.

8. *It was revealed unto him*—He was divinely informed, he had an express communication from God concerning the subject. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." The soul of a righteous and devout man is a proper habitation for the Holy Spirit.

9. *He should not see death*—They that seek shall find: It is impossible that a man who is earnestly seeking the salvation of God should be permitted to die without finding it.

10. *The Lord's Christ*—Rather, "the Lord's Anointed:" That Prophet, Priest, and King, who was typified by so many anointed persons under the old covenant; and who was appointed to come in the fulness of time, to accomplish all that was written in the law, in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him.

11. *He came by the Spirit into the temple*—Probably he had in view the prophecy of Malachi: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." In this Messenger of the Covenant, the soul of Simeon delighted. Now the prophecy was just going to be fulfilled; and the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in the soul of this righteous man, directed him to go and see its accomplishment. Those who come, under the influence of God's Spirit, to places of public worship, will undoubtedly meet with him who is the comfort and salvation of Israel.

12. *Then took he him up in his arms*—What must the holy soul of this man have felt in this moment! O inestimable privilege! And yet ours need not be inferior: "If a man love me," says Christ, "he will keep my word; and I and the Father will come in unto him, and make our abode with him." And, indeed, even Christ in the arms could not avail a man, if he were not formed in his heart.

13. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant*

depart in peace—Now thou dismissest, loosest him from life; having lived long enough to have the grand end of life accomplished.

14. *According to thy word*—It was promised to him, that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Anointed; and now, having seen him, he expects to be immediately dismissed in peace into the eternal world; having a full assurance and enjoyment of the salvation of God. Though Simeon means his death, yet the thing itself is not mentioned; for death has not only lost its sting, but its name also, to those who have, even by faith, seen the Lord's Anointed.

15. *Thy salvation*—That Saviour which it became the goodness of God to bestow upon man, and which the necessities of the human race required. Christ is called our salvation, as he is called our life, our peace, our hope; that is, he is the author of all these, to them who believe.

16. *Which thou hast prepared, which thou hast made ready, before the face, in the presence, of all people*—Here salvation is represented under the notion of a feast, which God himself has provided for the whole world; and to partake of which he has invited all the nations of the earth.

17. *A light to lighten the Gentiles*—A light of the Gentiles, for revelation. By Moses and the prophets, a light of revelation was given to the Jews, in the blessedness of which the Gentiles did not partake. By Christ and his apostles, a luminous revelation is about to be given unto the Gentiles, from the blessedness of which the Jews in general, by their obstinacy and unbelief, shall be long excluded. But to all true Israelites it shall be a glory, an evident fulfilment of all the predictions of the prophets, relative to the salvation of a lost world; and the first offers of it shall be made to the Jewish people, who may see in it the truth of their own scriptures indisputably evinced.

18. *Joseph and his mother marvelled*—For they did not as yet fully know the counsels of God, relative to the salvation which Christ was to procure; nor the way in which the purchase was to be made: But to this Simeon refers in the following verses.

19. *This child is set for the fall*—This

seems an allusion to Isaiah viii. 14, 15: "Jehovah, God of Hosts, shall be for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both houses of Israel; and many among them shall stumble and fall," &c. As Christ did not come as a temporal deliverer, in which character alone the Jews expected him, the consequence should be, they would reject him, and so fall by the Romans. But in the fulness of time there shall be a "rising again of many in Israel."

20. *And for a sign*—A mark or butt to shoot at; a metaphor taken from archers. Or perhaps Simeon refers to Isaiah xi. 10—12: "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek:" Intimating that the Jews would reject it, while the Gentiles should flock to it as their ensign of honour, under which they were to enjoy a glorious rest.

21. *Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*—Probably meaning, Thou also, as well as thy Son, shalt die a martyr for the truth. But as this is a metaphor used by the most respectable Greek writers to express the most pungent sorrow, it may here refer to the anguish Mary must have felt when standing beside the cross of her tortured Son.

22. *That the thoughts, or "reasonings," of many hearts may be revealed*—The meaning appears to me to be this: The rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish rulers will sufficiently prove that they sought the honour which comes from the world, and not that honour which comes from God: Because they rejected Jesus, merely for the reason that he did not bring them a temporal deliverance. So the very Pharisees, who were loud in their professions of sanctity and devotedness to God, rejected Jesus, and got him crucified, because his kingdom was not of this world. Thus the reasonings of many hearts were revealed.

23. *Anna, a prophetess*—It does not appear that this person was a prophetess in the strict sense of the word, that is, one who could foretell future events; but rather a holy woman, who, from her extensive knowledge and deep experience in divine things, was capable of instructing others; according to the use of the word, in

I Corinthians xiv. 3 : "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and to exhortation, and to comfort." So we find this holy widow proclaiming Jesus to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Though her family might have been a distinguished one in Jerusalem, yet we find that it was her very exemplary piety that entitled her to be thus honourably mentioned in the sacred history. It is an honourable thing indeed to have one's name written in the sacred records; but to be written in the book of life is of infinitely greater moment.

24. *Seven years*—She was a pure virgin when married, was favoured with her husband but seven years, and was now, in all, taking in the time of her virginity, marriage, and widowhood, eighty-four years of age. At such an age, it might be supposed she was reasonably exempted from performing the severer duties of religion; but her spirit of piety continued still to burn with a steady and undiminished flame.

25. *Departed not from the temple*—Attended constantly at the hours of prayer, which were nine in the morning and three in the afternoon.

26. *With fastings*—She accompanied her devotion with frequent fastings, probably not oftener than twice in the week.

27. *Coming in that instant*—At that very time, while Simeon held the blessed Redeemer in his arms, and was singing his departing and triumphal song.

28. *Gave thanks likewise*—She, as well as Simeon, returned God public thanks, for having sent this Saviour to Israel.

29. *Spoke of him*—Of the nature and design of his mission; and the glory that should take place in the land.

30. *In Jerusalem*—It is probable she went about from house to house, testifying the grace of God. It appears that this widow was one of the first publishers of the gospel of Christ, and it is likely that she travelled with it from house to house through the city of Jerusalem, where she knew they dwelt who were expecting the salvation of God.

"Let the example of these aged saints animate those whose hoary heads, like theirs, are a 'crown of glory,' being 'found in the way of righteousness.' Let those

venerable lips, so soon to be silent in the grave, be now employed in the praises of their Redeemer. Let them labour to leave those behind to whom Christ will be as precious as he has been to them; and who will be waiting for God's salvation when they are gone to enjoy it."—**WESLEY.**

Concerning Simeon, three things deserve to be especially noted: I. His faith. II. His song. And, III. His prophecy.

I. His faith. (1.) He expected the promised Redeemer, in virtue of the promises which God had made; and, to show that his faith was of the operation of God's Spirit, he lived a life of righteousness and devotedness to God. Many profess to expect the salvation which God has promised only to those who believe, while living in conformity to the world, under the influence of its spirit, and in the general breach of the righteous law of God.

(2.) The faith of Simeon led him only to wish for life that he might see Him who was promised, and be properly prepared for an inheritance among the sanctified. They who make not this use of life are much to be lamented. It would have been better for them had they never been born.

(3.) The faith of Simeon was crowned with success. Jesus came; he saw, he felt, he adored him! And, with a heart filled with the love of God, he breathed out his holy soul, and probably the last dregs of his life, in praise to the fountain of all good.

II. Simeon's song. By it he shows forth:—

(1.) The joy of his own heart. Lord, now thou dismissest thy servant; as if he had said: "Yes, O my God, I am going to quit this earth! I feel that thou callest me; and I quit it without regret. Thou hast fulfilled all my desires and completed my wishes, and I desire to be detained no longer from the full enjoyment of thyself." O, how sweet is death after such an enjoyment and discovery of eternal life!

(2.) Simeon shows forth the glory of Christ. He is the sun of righteousness, rising on a dark and ruined world with light and salvation. He is the light that shall manifest the infinite kindness of God to the Gentile people; proving that God is

good to all, and that "his tender mercies are over all his works."

He is the glory of Israel. It is by him that the Gentiles have been led to acknowledge the Jews as the peculiar people of God; their books as the word of God, and their teaching as the revelation of God. What an honour for this people, had they known how to profit by it!

(3.) He astonished Joseph and Mary with his sublime account of the Redeemer of the world. They hear him glorified, and their hearts exult in it. From this divine song they learn, that this miraculous son of theirs is the sum and substance of all the promises made unto the fathers, and of all the predictions of the prophets.

III. Simeon's prophecy.

(1.) He addresses Christ, and foretells that he should be for the ruin and recovery of many in Israel. How astonishing is the folly and perverseness of man, to turn that into poison which God has made the choicest medicine; and thus to kill themselves with the cure which he has appointed for them in the infinity of his love! Those who speak against Jesus, his ways, his doctrine, his cross, his sacrifice, are likely to stumble, and fall, and rise no more for ever! May the God of mercy save the reader from this condemnation!

(2.) He addresses Mary, and foretells the agonies she must go through. What must this holy woman have endured when she saw her Son crowned with thorns, scourged, buffeted, spit upon; when she

saw his hands and his feet nailed to the cross, and his side pierced with a spear! What a sword through her own soul must each of these have been! But this is not all. These sufferings of Jesus are predicted thirty years before they were to take place! What a martyrdom was this! While he is nourished in her bosom, she cannot help considering him as a lamb who is growing up to be sacrificed. The older he grows, the nearer the bloody scene approaches! Thus her sufferings must increase with his years, and only end with his life!

(3.) He foretells the effects which should be produced by the persecutions raised against Christ and his followers. This sword of persecution shall lay open the hearts of many, and discover their secret motives and designs. When the doctrine of the cross is preached, and persecution raised because of it, then the precious are easily distinguished from the vile. Those whose hearts are not established by grace, nor right with God, will turn aside from the way of righteousness, and deny the Lord that bought them. On the other hand, those whose faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, will continue faithful unto death, glorify God in the fire, and thus show forth the excellency of his salvation, and the sincerity of the profession which they had before made. Thus the thoughts of many hearts are still revealed.

SECTION XIV.—THE VISIT OF THE MAGIANS.

B. C. 4.

MATTHEW II. 1—12.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa¹ in the days of Herod the king,² behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star³ in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled,⁴ and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes⁵ of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: For thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda:

For out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.⁶ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; ⁷ gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.⁸ And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

1. *Bethlehem of Judea*—This city is situated on the declivity of a hill, about six miles from Jerusalem. *Beth-lechem* signifies "the house of bread." And the name may be considered as very properly applied to that place where Jesus, the Messiah, the true bread that came down from heaven, was manifested, to give life to the world; but also signifies "flesh," and is applied to that part of the sacrifice which was burnt upon the altar. Hence it is more proper to consider the name as signifying "the house of flesh," or, as some might suppose, "the house of the incarnation," that is, the place where God was manifested in the flesh for the salvation of a lost world.

2. *In the days of Herod the king*—This was Herod, improperly denominated the "great," the son of Antipater, an Idumean: He reigned thirty-seven years in Judea, reckoning from the time he was created king of that country, by the Romans. Our blessed Lord was born in the last year of his reign; and, at this time, the sceptre had literally departed from Judah, a foreigner being now upon the throne.

3. *We have seen his star*—Having discovered an unusual luminous appearance or meteor in the heavens, supposing these persons to have been Jews, and knowing the prophecies relative to the redemption of Israel, they probably considered this to be the star mentioned by Balaam, Numbers xxiv. 17.

"How just and how beautiful an emblem

was such a star of the blessed Person to whom it pointed! Celestial in its original; framed of the purest materials; admitting no dross and baseness into its composition; without spot, or the shadow of a cloud; shedding a lustre incapable of being sullied by the objects on which it fell, and passing through all things undefiled; moving about the world, though moving in it; placed in heaven, to give light upon the earth; rising in the east, but diffusing its glories to the west; the first fruits of the day, the bright and morning star, dispelling the shades, clearing the skies, eclipsing the other luminaries, reigning alone and unrivalled in the firmament; from thence, not more bright than beneficial, exerting an influence, powerful, though silent and secret; directing and attracting men to the salvation it portended!"—BISHOP HORNE.

4. *When Herod, the king, had heard these things, he was troubled*—Herod's consternation was probably occasioned by the agreement of the account of the magi, with an opinion predominant throughout the east, and particularly in Judea, that some great personage would soon make his appearance, for the deliverance of Israel from their enemies; and would take upon himself universal empire.

5. *The chief priests and scribes*—Not only the high priest for the time being, but also the chiefs or heads of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, which David distributed into so many courses. The word

scribe is often used for a "man of learning," especially for one skilled in the Mosaic law; and in the same sense it is used by the New Testament writers.

6. *That shall rule my people Israel*—"Who shall feed my people." That is, as a shepherd feeds his flock. Among the Greeks, kings are called "shepherds of the people." This appellation probably originated from the pastoral employment, which kings and patriarchs did not blush to exercise in the times of primitive simplicity; and it might particularly refer to the case of David, the great type of Christ, who was a keeper of his father's sheep, before he was raised to the throne of Israel.

7. *They presented unto him gifts*—The people of the east never approach the presence of kings and great personages, without a present in their hands.

8. *Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh*—Some will have these gifts to be emblematic of the divinity, regal office, and manhood of Christ. "They offered him incense as their God; gold as their King; and myrrh, as united to a human body, subject to suffering and death." Rather, they offered him the things which were in most esteem among themselves; and which were productions of their own country. The gold was probably a very providential supply, as on it, it is likely, they subsisted while in Egypt.

"From the example of the Magi, let us learn to be very watchful and observant of those lights which at sundry times and in divers manners are vouchsafed to us. At the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the circumstances of our lives shall pass in review, it will then be seen, that God did not 'leave

himself without witness.' It will appear, that the sinner had many calls, both from within and from without, to which he might have hearkened; and to which, if he had hearkened, they had been the means of correcting, instructing, and saving him. Above all things, how attentive should we be to the scriptures, wherein are contained the words that must finally decide the fate of those who have them in their hands, and are capable of perusing them! In these shines, with pure and ever-increasing lustre, the sure word of prophecy, pointing always, from the beginning, to the Saviour of mankind; and at last marking out the very place of his birth; like the star in the east, moving onward in its sphere, 'till it came, and stood over, where the young child was.' If we are not led by the one to seek after the Redeemer, surely they, who set out for Judea upon the evidence of the other, must rise up in the judgment against us to condemn us.

"And since we are commanded not to appear before the Lord empty, let us bring presents, when we come into his courts. Let us offer to him of our substance, and the first-fruits of our increase; let us offer to him of the true riches, with which he has blessed us; faith, tried, precious, resplendent, as *gold*; devotion, ascending from fervent affections, like the smoke of *frankincense* from the altar; love, peace, joy, and the other graces of sanctification, *fragrant*, cheering, and diffusive, like '*myrrh* and aloes, with all the chief spices, and powders of the merchant.' Let us offer to him our strength, our time, and our talents, our souls and bodies; all we have and all we are; to worship and obey him this day, and every day which it shall please him to add to our lives."—BISHOP HORNE.

SECTION XV.—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

B. C. 4.

MATTHEW II. 13.—23.

AND when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: For Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by

night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.¹ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard,² lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: For they are dead³ which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets,⁴ He shall be called a Nazarene.

1. *Out of Egypt have I called my son*—This is quoted from Hosea xi. 1, where the deliverance of Israel, and that only, is referred to. But as that deliverance was extraordinary, it is very likely that it had passed into a proverb, so that, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," might have been used to express any signal deliverance. I confess, I can see no other reference it can have to the case in hand, unless we suppose, which is possible, that God might have referred to this future bringing up of his Son Jesus from Egypt, under the type of the past deliverance of Israel from the same land.

2. *In Rama was there a voice heard*—These words were originally spoken concerning the captivity of the ten tribes; but are here elegantly applied to the murder of the innocents at Bethlehem. As if he had said, Bethlehem at this time resembled Rama; for as Rachel might be said to weep over her children, which were slaughtered, or gone into captivity; so in Bethlehem, the mothers lamented bitterly their children, because they were slain.

"Few mothers have had to pour out their lamentations over scenes so violent as these; but many a Rachel has had to watch the slow progress of disease, withering the strength, and blighting the beauty, of their offspring; and amidst deep maternal anguish has the dart of death done its abhorred work. And thus have countless infant graves been moistened by mothers' tears.

"All this is natural, and, to a certain degree, allowable. But learn to bless God for the hope you have as to children dying in infancy. They are removed from earth; they bloom no longer in your own domestic inclosure. Heaven is the richer for your loss. Transplanted to Eden, they shall flourish there for ever! Let heaven be dearer to you for what was once yours here, but which God has removed. Feel deeply, that though they cannot come back to you, nor would they wish it, yet that you may go to them. Let the reflection not only encourage you under bereavement, but excite you to increasing spirituality and devotion."—R. WATSON.

3. *They are dead*—Both Herod and Antipater his son; though some think the plural is here used for the singular, and that the death of Herod alone is here intended. But as Herod's son Antipater was at this time heir apparent to the throne, and he had cleared his way to it by procuring the death of both his elder brothers, he is probably alluded to here, as doubtless he entered into his father's designs. "They are dead:" Antipater was put to death, by his father's command, five days before this execrable tyrant went to his own place.

4. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets*—Leaving the spiritual reference out of the question, the Nazarene or Nazorean here may mean simply an inhabitant or person of Nazareth; as Galilean does a person or inhabitant of Galilee. The evangelist evidently designed to state, that neither the sojourning at Nazareth, nor our Lord being called a Nazarene, were fortuitous events, but were wisely determined and provided for in the providence of God; and therefore foretold by inspired men, or fore-represented by significant institutions.

"At the first sight, it seems of little consequence to know the place of Christ's nativity; for we should consider him as our Redeemer, whatever the circumstances might be which attended his mortal life. But, seeing it has pleased God to announce, beforehand, the place where the Saviour of the world should be born, it became necessary that it should happen precisely in that place; and that this should be one of the characteristics whereby Jesus Christ should be known to be the true Messiah.

"It is also a matter of small importance to us where we may live, provided we find genuine happiness. There is no place on earth, however poor and despicable, but may have better and more happy inhabitants than many of those are who dwell in the largest and most celebrated cities. Do we know a single place on the whole globe where the works of God do not appear under a thousand different forms, and where a person may not feel that blessed satisfaction which arises from a holy and Christian life? For an individual, that place is preferable to all others where he

can get and do most good. For a number of people, that place is best where they can find the greatest number of wise and pious men. Every nation declines, in proportion as virtue and religion lose their influence on the minds of the inhabitant. The place where a young man first beheld the dawn and the beauty of renewed nature, and with most lively sensations of joy and gratitude adored his God, with all the veneration and love his heart was capable of; the place where a virtuous couple first met, and got acquainted; or where two friends gave each other the noblest proofs of their most tender affection; the village where one may have given, or seen, the most remarkable example of goodness, uprightness, and patience; such places, I say, must be dear to their hearts.

"Bethlehem was, according to this rule, notwithstanding its smallness, a most venerable place; seeing that there so many pious people had their abode, and that acts of peculiar piety had often been performed in it. First, the patriarch Jacob stopped some time in it, to erect a monument to his well-beloved Rachel. It was at Bethlehem that honest Naomi, and her modest daughter-in-law, Ruth, gave such proofs of their faith and holiness; and in it Boaz, the generous benefactor, had his abode and his possessions. At Bethlehem the humble Jesse sojourned, the happy father of so many sons; the youngest of whom rose from the pastoral life to the throne of Israel. It was in this country that David formed the resolution of building a house for the Lord, and in which he showed himself the true shepherd and father of his subjects, when, at the sight of the destroying angel, whose sword spread consternation and death on all hands, he made intercession for his people. It was in Bethlehem that Zerubbabel the prince was born, this descendant of David, who was the type of that Ruler and Shepherd under whose empire Israel is one day to assemble, in order to enjoy uninterrupted happiness. Lastly, in this city the Son of God appeared; who, by his birth, laid the foundation of that salvation, which, as Redeemer, he was to purchase by his death for the whole world. Thus, in places which from their smallness are entitled to little notice, men sometimes spring, who

become the benefactors of the human race. Often an inconsiderable village has given birth to a man, who, by his wisdom, uprightness, and heroism, has been a blessing to whole kingdoms."—*STURM'S Reflections*, translated by A. C.

SECTION XVI.—CHRIST AT THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS.

A. D. 8.

LUKE II. 40—52.

AND the child grew,¹ and waxed strong in spirit,² filled with wisdom;³ and the grace of God was upon him.⁴ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company,⁵ went a day's journey;⁶ and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors,⁷ both hearing them, and asking them questions.⁸ And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?⁹ behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me?¹⁰ wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?¹¹ And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

1. *The child grew*—As to his body; being in perfect health.

2. *Waxed strong in spirit*—His rational soul became strong and vigorous.

3. *Filled with wisdom*—The Divinity continuing to communicate itself more and more, in proportion to the increase of the rational principle. The reader should never forget that Jesus was perfect man, as well as God.

4. *And the grace of God was upon him*—Even Christ himself, who knew no sin, grew in the favour of God; and, as to his human nature, increased in the graces of the Holy Spirit. From this we learn, that

if a man were as pure and as perfect as the man Jesus Christ himself was, yet he might nevertheless increase in the image, and consequently in the favour, of God. God loves every thing and person, in proportion to the nearness of the approaches made to his own perfections.

5. *Supposing him to have been in the company*—Some have supposed that the men and women marched in separate companies on these occasions, which is very likely; and that sometimes the children kept company with the men, and sometimes with the women. This might have led to what otherwise seems to have been inex-

cessible carelessness in Joseph and Mary. Joseph, not seeing Jesus in the men's company, might suppose he was with his mother in the women's company; and Mary, not seeing him with her, might imagine he was with Joseph.

6. *Went a day's journey*—Knowing what a treasure they possessed, how could they be so long without looking on it? Where were the bowels and tender solicitude of the mother? Let them answer this question who can.

7. *Sitting in the midst of the doctors*—The Rabbins, who were explaining the law and the ceremonies of the Jewish religion to their disciples.

8. *Asking them questions*—Not as a scholar asks his teacher, to be informed; but as a teacher, who proposes questions to his scholars, in order to take an occasion to instruct them.

9. *Why hast thou thus dealt with us?*—It certainly was not his fault, but theirs. Men are very apt to lay on others the blame of their own misconduct.

10. *How is it that ye sought me?*—Is not this intended as a gentle reproof? Why had ye me to seek? Ye should not have left my company, when ye knew I am constantly employed in performing the will of the Most High.

11. *My Father's business*—Some think that these words should be translated, "In my Father's house;" which was a reason that they should have sought him in the temple only. As if he had said, "Where should a child be found but in his father's house?" Our Lord took this opportunity to instruct Joseph and Mary concerning his divine nature and mission. "My Father's concerns:" This saying, one would think, could not have been easily misunderstood. It shows at once that he came down from heaven. Joseph had no concerns in the temple; and yet we find that they did not fully comprehend it. How slow of heart is man to credit any thing that comes from God!

The design of our blessed Lord in staying behind in the temple seems to have been twofold. (1.) To prepare the Jews to acknowledge in him a divine and supernatural wisdom. And, (2.) To impress the minds of Joseph and Mary with a proper idea of his independence and divinity. Their con-

duct, in this business, may be a lasting lesson, and profitable warning, to all the disciples of Christ.

(1.) It is possible—by not carefully watching the heart, and by not keeping sacredly and constantly in view the spirituality of every duty—to lose the presence and power of Christ, even in religious ordinances. Joseph and Mary were at the feast of the passover when they lost Jesus.

(2.) Many who have sustained loss in their souls, are kept from making speedy application to God for help and salvation, through the foolish supposition, that their state is not so bad as it really is; and, in the things of salvation, many content themselves with the persuasion, that the religious people with whom they associate are the peculiar favourites of heaven, and that they are in a state of complete safety while connected with them.

"They, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey."

(3.) Deep sorrow and self-reproach must be the consequence of the discovery of so great a loss as that of the presence and power of Christ. Joseph and Mary sought him sorrowing.

(4.) When people are convinced, by the light of the Word, that their souls are not in a safe state, and that unless they find the Redeemer of the world they must perish, they are naturally led to inquire, among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, for Him who saves sinners. But this often proves fruitless; they know not Jesus themselves, and they cannot tell others where to find him.

"They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and found him not."

(5.) When people perceive that they have proceeded in a certain course of life for a considerable time, without that salvation which God promises in his word, they should first stop and inquire into their state, and when they find that they have been posting into eternity, not only without a preparation for glory, but with an immense load of guilt upon their souls, they should turn back, and, as their time may be but short, they should seek diligently.

"They turned back again to Jerusalem, earnestly seeking him."

(6.) The likeliest place to find Jesus and his salvation is the temple: The place where his pure, unadulterated gospel is

preached; the sanctuary where the power and glory of God are seen in the conviction, conversion, and salvation of sinners. "They found him in the temple."

(7.) Trials, persecutions, and afflictions are all nothing, when the presence and power of Christ are felt; but when a testimony of his approbation lives no longer in the heart, every thing is grievous and insupportable. The fatigue of the journey to Bethlehem, the flight from the cruelty of Herod, and the unavoidable trials in Egypt, were cheerfully supported by Joseph and Mary, because, in all, they had Jesus with them; but now, they are in distress and misery, because he is behind in Jerusalem. Reader, if thou have lost Jesus, take no rest to body or soul till thou have found him.

Without him, all is confusion and ruin; with him, all is joy and peace.

"We see, through the interesting opening which this account makes into the history of his youth, how perfect a unity and consistency runs through the whole life of the blessed Saviour; and how completely, in every age, it accorded with a sinless character, and the fact of the union of the divine with the human nature. He had not then entered upon his office as Teacher; but it is clear what were the subjects which, at this early period, occupied his thoughts; and with what serious interest he was preparing for his great work of teaching and preaching the kingdom of God."—R. WATSON.

SECTION XVII.—JOHN THE BAPTIST COMMENCES HIS MINISTRY.

A. D. 26. MATTHEW III. 1—6; MARK I. 1—6; LUKE III. 1—6.

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God in those days came unto John¹ the Baptist,² the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness of Judæa. And John did baptize in the wilderness, and came into all the country about Jordan, preaching³ the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; and saying, Repent ye;⁴ for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.⁵ As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, For this is he that was spoken of, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness,⁶ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth: And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him they of Jerusalem, and all the land of Judæa, and

all the region round about Jordan. And were all baptized⁷ of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.⁸

1. *The word of God came unto John*—

That is, the Holy Spirit that revealed to him this doctrine of salvation. This came upon him in the desert, where he was living in such a state of ansterity as gave him full right to preach all the rigours of penitence to others. Thus we find that the first preachers, historians, and followers of the doctrines of the gospel were men eminent for the ansterity of their lives, the simplicity of their manners, and the sanctity of their conduct; they were authorized by God, and filled with the most precious gifts of his Spirit. And what are the apostles which the new philosophy sends us? Philosophers full of themselves, not guided by the love of truth or wisdom, but ever seeking their own glory; in constant hostility among themselves, because of their separate pretensions to particular discoveries, of the honour of which they would almost as soon lose life as be deprived. Who are they? Men of a mortified life and unblamable conversation? No—they are poets and poetasters; composers of romances, novels, intrigues, farces, comedies, &c., full of extravagance and impurity. They are pretended moralists that preach up pleasure and sensual gratification, and dissolve, as far as they can, the sacred and civil ties that unite and support society. They are men whose guilt is heightened by their assuming the sacred name of philosophers, and dignifying their impure system with a name at which Philosophy herself blushes and bleeds.

2. *The Baptist*—John, surnamed the Baptist, because he required those to be baptized who professed to be contrite because of their sins, was the son of a priest named Zacharias, and his wife Elisabeth, and was born about A. M. 3999, and about six months before our blessed Lord. For his fidelity in reproving Herod for his incest with his brother Philip's wife, he was cast into prison, no doubt at the suggestion of Herodias, the profligate woman in question. He was at last beheaded at her instigation, and his head given as a present to Salome, her daughter, who, by her elegant dancing, had highly gratified Herod, the paramour of her incestuous mother. His

ministry was short; for he appears to have been put to death in the twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth year of the Christian era.

3. *Come preaching*—Proclaiming, as a herald, a matter of great and solemn importance to men; the subject not his own, nor of himself, but from that God from whom alone he had received his commission.

4. *Repent*—This was the matter of the preaching. Repentance implies, that a measure of divine wisdom is communicated to the sinner, and that he thereby becomes wise to salvation; that his mind, purposes, opinions, and inclinations, are changed; and that, in consequence, there is a total change in his conduct. It need scarcely be remarked, that, in this state, a man feels deep anguish of soul, because he has sinned against God, unfitted himself for heaven, and exposed his soul to hell. Hence, a true penitent has that sorrow whereby he forsakes sin, not only because it has been ruinous to his own soul, but because it has been offensive to God.

5. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*—Referring to the prophecy of Daniel, vii. 13, 14, where the reign of Christ among men is expressly foretold. This phrase, and "the kingdom of God," mean the same thing; namely, the dispensation of infinite mercy, and manifestation of eternal truth, by Christ Jesus, producing the true knowledge of God, accompanied with that worship which is pure and holy, worthy of that God who is its institutor and its object. "But why is this called a kingdom?" Because it has its laws, all the moral precepts of the gospel; its subjects, all who believe in Christ Jesus; and its King, the Sovereign of heaven and earth. N. B. Jesus Christ never saved a soul which he did not govern; nor is this Christ precious or estimable to any man who does not feel a spirit of subjection to the divine will.

But why is it called "the kingdom of heaven?" Because God designed that his kingdom of grace here should resemble the kingdom of glory above. And hence our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." "The king-

dom of God is not meat and drink," does not consist in the gratification of sensual passions, or worldly ambition; "but *is* righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." Now what can there be more than this in glory? Righteousness, without mixture of sin; peace, without strife or contention; joy in the Holy Ghost, spiritual joy, without mixture of misery! And all this, it is possible, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to enjoy here below. "How then does heaven itself differ from this state?" Answer. It makes the righteousness eternal, the peace eternal, and the joy eternal. This is the heaven of heavens! It is farther added, this kingdom is at hand. The dispensation of the glorious gospel was now about to be fully opened, and the Jews were to have the first offers of salvation. This kingdom is also at hand to us; and wherever "Christ crucified" is preached, there is salvation to be found. Jesus is proclaimed to thee, O man! as infinitely able and willing to save. Believe in his name, cast thy soul upon his atonement, and enter into rest!

6. *The voice of one crying in the wilderness*—This is quoted from Isaiah xl. 3, which clearly proves that John the Baptist was the person of whom the prophet spoke. The idea is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey through a desert country, sent harbingers before them, to prepare all things for their passage; and pioneers to open the passes, to level the ways, and to remove all impediments. The Jewish church was that desert country to which John was sent, to announce the coming of the Messiah. It was destitute at that time of all religious cultivation, and of the spirit and practice of piety; and John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, by preaching the doctrine of repentance. The desert is therefore to be considered as affording a proper emblem of the rude state of the Jewish church, which is the true wilderness meant by the prophet, and in which John was to prepare the way of the promised Messiah.

7. *Were all baptized*—In what form baptism was originally administered, has been deemed a subject worthy of serious dispute. Those who are dipped or immersed in water, in the name of the Holy Trinity, I believe

to be evangelically baptized; those who are washed or sprinkled with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I believe to be equally so; and the repetition of such a baptism I believe to be profane. Others have a right to believe the contrary, if they see good. After all, it is the thing signified, and not the mode, which is the essential part of the sacrament.

8. *Confessing their sins*—"Earnestly acknowledging that their sins were their own:" And thus taking the whole blame upon themselves, and laying nothing to the charge of God or man. This is essential to true repentance; and, till a man take the whole blame on himself, he cannot feel the absolute need he has of casting his soul on the mercy of God, that he may be saved.

It was an invariable custom among the Jews to admit no proselyte to baptism, till he had, in the most solemn manner, declared that he for ever had renounced all idolatrous worship, all heathenish superstitions, and promised an entire and unreserved submission to the law of Moses. This was necessary for a proselyte adult; a child dedicated to God by baptism must be brought up in this faith.

The facts which St. Luke mentions here tend much to confirm the truth of the evangelical history. Christianity differs widely from philosophic system; it is founded in the goodness and authority of God; and attested by historic facts. It differs also from popular tradition, which either has had no pure origin, or which is lost in unknown or fabulous antiquity. It differs also from Pagan and Mohammedan revelations, which were fabricated in a corner, and had no witnesses. In the above verses we find the persons, the places, and the times marked with the utmost exactness. It was under the first Cæsars that the preaching of the gospel took place; and in their time, the facts on which the whole of Christianity is founded made their appearance; an age the most enlightened, and best known from the multitude of its historic records. It was in Judea, where every thing that professed to come from God was scrutinized with the most exact and unmerciful criticism. In writing the history of Christianity, the evangelists appeal to cer-

tain facts which were publicly transacted in such places, under the government and inspection of such and such persons, and in such particular times. A thousand persons could have confronted the falsehood, had it been one! These appeals are made; a challenge is offered to the Roman government, and to the Jewish rulers and people; a new religion has been introduced in such a place, at such a time; this has been accompanied with such and such facts and miracles! Who can disprove this? All are silent. None appears to offer even an objection. The cause of infidelity and

irreligion is at stake! If these facts cannot be disproved, the religion of Christ must triumph. None appears, because none could appear. Now let it be observed, that the persons of that time, only, could confute these things, had they been false; they never attempted it; therefore these facts are absolute and incontrovertible truths; this conclusion is necessary. Shall a man then give up his faith in such attested facts as these, because, more than a thousand years after, an infidel creeps out, and ventures publicly to sneer at what his iniquitous soul hopes is not true?

SECTION XVIII.—JOHN'S ADDRESSES TO HIS HEARERS.

A. D. 26. MATTHEW III. 7—12; MARK I. 7, 8; LUKE III. 7—18.

BUT when he saw many of the Pharisees¹ and Sadducees² come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers,³ who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for, *or* worthy of, repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: For I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid⁴ unto the root of the trees: Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?⁵ He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats,⁶ let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans⁷ to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him,⁸ saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely;⁹ and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ¹⁰ or not; John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but one mightier than I cometh, after me,¹¹ whose shoes I am not worthy to bear,¹² the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:¹³ Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor,¹⁴ and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire

unquenchable. And many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people.

1. *Pharisees*—A very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their origin, were, very probably, a pure and holy people. It is likely that they got the name of Pharisees, that is, "Separatists," from their separating themselves from the pollution of the Jewish national worship; but, in process of time, like all religious sects and parties, they degenerated; they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to recur to first principles, and had only the form of godliness, when Jesus Christ preached in Judea; for he bore witness, that they did make the outside of the cup and platter clean; they observed the rules of their institution, but the spirit was gone.

2. *Sadducees*—A sect who denied the existence of angels and spirits, consequently all divine influence and inspiration, and also the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees of that time were the materialists and deists of the Jewish nation. When the sect of the Pharisees arose, cannot be distinctly ascertained; but it is supposed to have been some time after the Babylonish captivity. The sect of the Sadducees were the followers of one Sadok, a disciple of Antigonus Sochans, who flourished about three centuries before Christ. There was a third sect among the Jews, called the Essenes or Essenians. The multitudes, who had no worldly interest to support, no character to maintain by living in their usual way, came publicly, and openly acknowledged that they were sinners; and stood in need of mercy. The others, who endeavoured to secure their worldly interests by making a fair show in the flesh, are supposed to have come privately, that they might not be exposed to reproach; and that they might not lose their reputation for wisdom and sanctity, which their consciences, under the preaching of the Baptist, told them they had no right to.

3. *O generation of vipers*—As their fathers were, so were they, children of the wicked one. This is God's estimate of a sinner, whether he wade in wealth or soar in fame. The Jews were the seed of the serpent, who should bruise the heel of the woman's seed, and whose head should be bruised by him.

They came privately; and John may be supposed to address them thus: "Did any person give you a private warning? No, you received your convictions under the public ministry of the word. The multitudes of the poor and wretched, who have been convinced of sin, have publicly acknowledged their crimes and sought mercy. God will unmask you; you have deceived the people; you have deceived yourselves; you must appear just what you are; and, if you expect mercy from God, act like the penitent multitude, and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. Do not begin to trifle with your convictions, by thinking that, because you are descendants of Abraham, therefore you are entitled to God's favour; God can, out of these stones, (pointing probably to those scattered about in the desert, which he appears to have considered as an emblem of the Gentiles,) raise up a faithful seed, who, though not natural descendants of your excellent patriarch, yet shall be his worthy children, as being partakers of his faith, and friends of his God."

4. *And now also the axe is laid—Or, "Even now the axe leth."* As if he had said, There is not a moment to spare; God is about to cut off every impenitent soul; you must therefore either turn to God immediately, or be utterly and finally ruined. It was customary with the prophets to represent the kingdoms, nations, and individuals, whose ruin they predicted, under the notion of forests and trees, doomed to be cut down.

5. *What shall we do then?*—The preaching of the Baptist had been accompanied with an uncommon effusion of that Spirit which convices of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The people who heard him now earnestly begin to inquire what they must do to be saved. They are conscious that they are exposed to the judgments of the Lord, and they wish to escape from the coming wrath.

6. *He that hath two coats, &c.*—He first teaches the great mass of the people their duty to each other. They were uncharitable and oppressive, and he taught them not to expect any mercy from the

hand of God, while they acted towards others in opposition to its dictates. If men be unkind and uncharitable towards each other, how can they expect the mercy of the Lord to be extended towards themselves ?

7. *Then came also publicans*—He next instructs the tax-gatherers in the proper discharge of their duty ; though it was an office detested by the Jews at large, yet the Baptist does not condemn it. It is only the abuse of it that he speaks against. If taxes be necessary for the support of a state, there must be collectors of them ; and the collector, if he properly discharge his duty, is not only a useful but also a respectable officer. But it seems the Jewish tax-gatherers exacted much more from the people than government authorized them to do, and the surplus they pocketed. See the conduct of many of our surveyors and assessors. They are oppressors of the people, and enrich themselves by unjust surcharges. This, I am inclined to think, is too common an evil ; and the executive government is often the people's scape-goat, to bear the crimes of its officers ; crimes in which it has no concern.

8. *The soldiers likewise demanded of him*—He, thirdly, instructs those among the military. They were either Roman soldiers, or the soldiers of Herod or Phillip. "Use no violence to any ;" do not extort money or goods by force or violence from any.

9. *Neither accuse any falsely*—Or, "On a frivolous pretence." Be not sycophants, like those who are base flatterers of their masters ; who, to ingratiate themselves into their esteem, malign, accuse, and impeach the innocent.

10. *Whether he were the Christ*—So general was the reformation which was produced by the Baptist's preaching, that the people were ready to consider him as the promised Messiah. Thus John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and reformed all things ; showed the people, the tax-gatherers, and the soldiers, their respective duties, and persuaded them to put away the evil of their doings.

11. *But he that cometh after me*—Or, "Is coming after me," who is now on his way, and will shortly make his appearance. Jesus Christ began his ministry when he

was thirty years of age, which was the age appointed by the law. John the Baptist was born about six months before Christ ; and, as he began his public ministry when thirty years of age, then this "coming after" refers to six months after the commencement of John's public preaching, at which time Christ entered upon his.

12. *Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear*—This saying is expressive of the most profound humility and reverence.

13. *With the Holy Ghost and with fire*—That the influences of the Spirit of God are here designed, needs but little proof. Christ's religion was to be a spiritual religion, and was to have its seat in the heart. Outward precepts, however well they might describe, could not produce, inward spirituality. This was the province of the Spirit of God, and of it alone ; therefore he is represented here under the similitude of fire, because he was to illuminate and invigorate the soul, penetrate every part, and assimilate the whole to the image of the God of glory. As if he had said, This baptism is not to be rested in ; it is only an emblem of that which you must receive from Him who is mightier than I. It is he only who can communicate the Holy Spirit ; and water-baptism is nothing, but as it points out, and leads to, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

14. *His floor*—Does not this mean the land of Judea, which had been long, as it were, the threshing-floor of the Lord ? God says, he will now, by the winning fan, namely, the Romans, "thoroughly cleanse his floor ;" "the wheat," those who believe in the Lord Jesus, "he will gather into his garner," either take to heaven from the evil to come, or put in a place of safety, as he did the Christians, by sending them to Pella, in Cælo-Syria, previously to the destruction of Jerusalem. "But he will burn up the chaff ;" the disobedient and rebellious Jews, who would not come unto Christ, that they might have life.

"We have violated the divine law. The divine law is a transcript of the divine perfections. These perfections must necessarily be correspondent to the nature of God. That nature is eternal, immense, immutable. The demands of his law must, therefore, be in every respect commensurate to his nature. They must be eternal,

immense, immutable. This law, then, must either be fulfilled, or we must suffer the punishment due to its transgression. And what is that punishment? This is already answered. As the perfections or attributes of Deity are correspondent to the divine essence, God is truly infinite, is absolutely perfect, in holiness, justice, goodness, &c. Sin committed against such a

Being must necessarily be commensurate; it must be of infinite demerit; and if of infinite demerit, it must deserve an infinite punishment. It is impossible that such a punishment could be sustained by a finite being in time: It follows from this, as well as from some other reasons, that the punishment must be eternal."—H. S. BOYD.

SECTION XIX.—THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

A. D. 26. MATTHEW III. 13—17; MARK I. 9—11; LUKE III. 21—23.

AND it came to pass in those days, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.¹ Then he suffered him: And *he* was baptized of John in Jordan. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: And straightway coming up out of the water, and praying, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove,—in a bodily shape like a dove,—and lighting upon him: ² And lo, there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.³ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.

1. *To fulfil all righteousness*—That is, "every righteous ordinance."

But was this an ordinance? Undoubtedly: It was the initiatory ordinance of the Baptist's dispensation. Now, as Christ had submitted to circumcision, which was the initiatory ordinance of the Mosaic dispensation, it was necessary that he should submit to this, which was instituted by no less an authority, and was the introduction to his own dispensation of eternal mercy and truth. But it was necessary on another account: Our Lord represented the high priest, and was to be the High Priest over the house of God: Now, as the high priest was initiated into his office by washing and anointing, so must Christ: And hence he was baptized, washed, and anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus he fulfilled the righteous ordinance of his initiation into the office of high priest,

and thus was prepared to make an atonement for the sins of mankind.

2. *The heavens opened unto him; that is, to John the Baptist; and he, John, saw the Spirit of God lighting upon him*—That is, on Jesus. There has been some controversy about the manner and form in which the Spirit of God rendered itself visible on this occasion. St. Luke says it was "in a bodily shape like to a dove:" And this likeness to a dove some refer to a hovering motion, like to that of a dove, and not to the form of the dove itself: But the terms of the text are too precise to admit of this far-fetched interpretation.

This passage affords no mean proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. That three distinct persons are here represented, there can be no dispute. (1.) The person of Jesus Christ, baptized by John in Jordan. (2.) The person of the Holy Ghost in a

bodily shape like a dove. (3.) The person of the Father: "A voice came out of heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son," &c. The voice is here represented as proceeding from a different place to that in which the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit were manifested; and merely, I think, more forcibly to mark this divine personality.

3. *In whom I am well pleased*—"In whom I have delighted." By this voice, and overshadowing of the Spirit, the mission of the Lord Jesus was publicly and solemnly accredited; God intimating that he had before delighted in him: The law, in all its ordinances, having pointed him out; for they could not be pleasing to God,

but as they were fulfilled in, and showed forth, the Son of Man, till he came.

"The descent of the Spirit was promised to be a sign to John the Baptist himself, John i. 33, to point out that Personage whose precursor he was commissioned to be. It is not probable that this solemn token was given in the midst of a multitude; and in the presence of the scoffing Pharisees and Sadducees. The whole had too sacred and too mystic a character for indiscriminate gaze; and as no reference occurs to this event in the gospel, as a public one, we may conclude that none but the Baptist and Christ were present."—R. WATSON.

SECTION XX.—THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW IV. 1—11; MARK I. 12, 13; LUKE IV. 1—13.

AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness,¹ to be tempted² of the devil. And he was there in the wilderness with the wild beasts,³ being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing. And when he had fasted forty days⁴ and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter,⁵ the devil, came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God,⁶ command that these stones⁷ be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word⁸ that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:⁹ For it is written,¹⁰ He shall give his angels charge concerning thee to keep thee:¹¹ And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up,¹² lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt¹³ the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him¹⁴ all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time: And saith unto him, All these things, and all this power, and the glory of them, will I give thee: For that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt fall down and worship me,¹⁵ all these things will I give thee, *and* all shall be thine. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee behind me,¹⁶ Satan: For it is written, Thou shalt worship the

Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then when the devil had ended all the temptation, he leaveth him, and departed from him for a season: And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.¹⁷

1. *The Spirit driveth him into the wilderness*—This transaction appears to have taken place immediately after Christ's baptism; and this bringing up of Christ was through the influence of the Spirit of God; that Spirit which had rested upon him in his baptism.

2. *To be tempted*—The first act of the ministry of Jesus Christ was a combat with satan. Does not this receive light from Genesis iii. 15? "I will put enmity between the woman's seed and thy seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

3. *With the wild beasts*—This is a curious circumstance, which is mentioned by none of the other evangelists, and seems to intimate that he was in the most remote, unfrequented, and savage part of the desert; which, together with the diabolic influence, tended to render the whole scene the more horrid. Perhaps this very circumstance is mentioned, as emblematical of that savage and brutal cruelty with which he was persecuted to death by the Jews and Gentiles, instigated thereto by the malice of satan.

4. *And when he had fasted forty days*—It is remarkable that Moses, the great lawgiver of the Jews, previously to his receiving the law from God, fasted forty days in the mount; that Elijah, the chief of the prophets, fasted also forty days; and that Christ, the giver of the new covenant, should act in the same way. Was not all this intended to show that God's kingdom on earth was to be spiritual and divine? that it should not consist in meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?

5. *And when the tempter*—This onset of satan was made (speaking after the manner of men) judiciously; he came when Jesus, after having fasted forty days and forty nights, was hungry. Now, as hunger naturally diminishes the strength of the body, the mind gets enfeebled, and becomes easily irritated; and, if much watching and prayer be not employed, the uneasiness which is occasioned by a lack of food may soon produce impatience; and

in this state of mind the tempter has great advantages. The state of our bodily health and worldly circumstances may afford our adversary many opportunities of doing us immense mischief.

6. *If thou be the Son of God*—Or, "a Son of God." It is certain, whatever Satan might suspect, he did not fully know that the Person he tempted was the true Messiah. Perhaps one grand object of his temptation was to find this out.

7. *Command that these stones*—The meaning of this temptation is: "Distrust the divine providence and support, and make use of illicit means to supply thy necessities."

8. *But by every word*—Our Lord's meaning seems to be this: God purposes the welfare of his creatures; all his appointments are calculated to promote this end. Some of them may appear to man to have a contrary tendency; but even fasting itself, when used in consequence of a divine injunction, becomes a mean of supporting that life which it seems naturally calculated to impair or destroy.

9. *Cast thyself down*—Our Lord had repelled the first temptation by an act of confidence in the power and goodness of God; and now satan solicits him to make trial of it. Through the unparalleled subtlety of satan, the very means we make use of to repel one temptation may be used by him as the groundwork of another. This method he often uses, in order to confound us in our confidence.

10. *It is written*—"This is the first speech that proceeded from our Saviour's mouth, since his entrance into his ministerial function, that is upon record; and though it be very short, yet is it very material for observation of these things: (1.) That the first word spoken by Christ in his ministerial office, is an assertion of the authority of scripture. (2.) That he opposeth the word of God as the properest encounterer against the words of the devil. (3.) That he allegeth scripture as a thing undeniable and uncontrollable by the devil himself. (4.) That he maketh the scripture his

rule, though he had the fulness of the Spirit above measure."—LIGHTFOOT.

11. *He shall give his angels charge, &c.*—This is a mutilated quotation of Psalm xci. 11. The clause, "To keep thee in all thy ways," satan chose to leave out, as quite unsuitable to his design. That God has promised to protect and support his servants, admits of no dispute; but, as the path of duty is the way of safety, they are entitled to no good when they walk out of it.

12. *In their hands they shall bear thee up.*—This is a metaphor, taken from a nurse's management of her child: In teaching it to walk, she guides it along plain ground; but when stones or other obstacles occur, she lifts up the child, and carries it over them, and then sets it down to walk again. Thus she keeps it in all its ways, watching over, and guarding, every step it takes. Thus the most merciful God deals with the children of men, ever guarding them by his eye, and defending them by his power.

13. *Thou shalt not tempt.*—To expose myself to any danger naturally destructive, with the vain presumption that God will protect and defend me from the ruinous consequences of my imprudent conduct, is to tempt God.

14. *An exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him.*—If the words, "all the kingdoms of the world," be taken in a literal sense, then this must have been a visionary representation, as the highest mountain on the face of the globe could not suffice to make evident even one hemisphere of the earth, and the other must of necessity be in darkness.

15. *If thou wilt fall down and worship me.*—As if he had said, "The whole of this land is now under my government; do me homage for it, and I will deliver it into thy hand."

16. *Get thee behind me.*—This temptation savouring of nothing but diabolical impudence, Jesus did not treat it as the others; but, with divine authority, commanded the tempter to return to his own place.

17. *Behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*—That is, brought that food which was necessary to support nature.

In the course of this trial, it appears that our blessed Lord was tempted, (1.) To

distrust: "Command these stones to be made bread." (2.) To presumption: "Cast thyself down." (3.) To worldly ambition: "All these will I give." (4.) To idolatry: "Fall down and worship me," or, "do me homage." There is probably not a temptation of satan, but is reducible to one or other of these four articles.

From the whole we may learn,

(1.) No man, howsoever holy, is exempted from temptation; for God, manifested in the flesh, was tempted by the devil.

(2.) That the best way to foil the adversary is by the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

(3.) That to be tempted, even to the greatest abominations, while a person resists, is not sin; for Christ was tempted to worship the devil.

(4.) That there is no temptation which is, from its own nature or favouring circumstances, irresistible. God has promised to bruise even satan under our feet.

As I wish to speak what I think most necessary, on every subject, when I first meet it, and once for all, I would observe,

(1.) That the fear of being tempted may become a most dangerous snare.

(2.) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come, he will give grace to bear or overcome it.

(3.) That our spiritual interests shall be always advanced in proportion to our trials and faithful resistance.

(4.) That a more than ordinary measure of divine consolation shall be the consequence of every victory.

"Our mother Eve had been tempted of the serpent, by 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' Accordingly was our Saviour assaulted at this time, by the same tempter. (1.) He would have tempted him to lust of the flesh, when, perceiving him hungry, he moveth him to turn stones into bread. (2.) To lust of the eyes, when he showed and offered to him the glory and pomp of all the kingdoms of the earth. And, (3.) To pride of life, when he would persuade him from the ordinary way of coming down from the top of the temple, but would have him to cast himself headlong, presuming upon a promise."—LIGHTFOOT.

SECTION XXI.—THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST.

A. D. 26—28.

JOHN I. 15—28.

JOHN bare witness of him,¹ and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me : For he was before me.² And of his fulness³ have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses,⁴ *but* grace and truth⁵ came by Jesus Christ.⁶ No man hath seen God at any time ;⁷ the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*. And this is the record of John,⁸ when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed,⁹ I am not¹⁰ the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet ? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself ? He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet ? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water : But there standeth one among you, whom ye know not ; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

1. *Of him*—The glorious Personage before mentioned. John the Baptist, whose history was well known to the persons to whom this gospel came in the beginning, bare witness ; “ and he cried,” being deeply convinced of the importance and truth of the subject, he delivered his testimony with the utmost zeal and earnestness, saying, “ This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me ;” for I am no other than the voice of the crier in the wilderness, Isaiah xl. 3, the forerunner of the Messiah.

2. *Was before me*—Speaking by the prophets, and warning your fathers to repent and return to God, as I now warn you ; “ for he was before me,” he was from eternity, and from him I have derived both my being and my ministry.

3. *And of his fulness*—Of the plenitude of his grace and mercy, by which he made

an atonement for sin ; and of the plenitude of his wisdom and truth, by which the mysteries of heaven have been revealed, and the science of eternal truth taught. “ Have all we received ;” all we apostles have received grace or mercy to pardon our sins, and truth to enable us so to write and speak, concerning these things, that those who attend to our testimony shall be unerringly directed in the way of salvation, and with us continue to receive grace upon grace, one blessing after another, till they are “ filled with all the fulness of God.” John seems here to refer to the gospel as succeeding the law : The law was certainly a dispensation both of grace and truth ; for it pointed out the gracious design of God to save men by Christ Jesus ; and it was at least a most expressive and well-defined shadow of good things to come : But the gospel, which

had now taken place, introduced that plenitude of grace and truth, to the whole world, which the law had only shadowed forth to the Jewish people, and which they imagined should have been restrained to themselves alone. In the most gracious economy of God, one dispensation of mercy and truth is designed to make way for, and to be followed by, another and a greater: Thus the law succeeded the patriarchal dispensation, and the gospel the law; more and more of the plenitude of the grace of the gospel becomes daily manifest to the genuine followers of Christ; and, to those who are faithful unto death, a heaven full of eternal glory will soon succeed to the grace of the gospel.

“Is not the science of theology like an ocean, whose depth may be conjectured, but cannot be ascertained; like a mountain, whose summit we may aspire to, but can never gain; or like a mine, which rewards our daily toil by the daily disclosure of its treasures, and yet continues inexhaustible? In this mine be it ours with unwearied hands to labour! Though unnumbered treasures will remain unknown and unexplored, we may collect many a resplendent gem. We may adorn our brow with jewels, whose lustre will abide when the gold of Mexico no more shall glitter, and the diamond of Golconda shall have ceased to sparkle.”—H. S. BOYD.

4. *The law was given by Moses*—Moses received the law from God, and through him it was given to the Jews.

5. *But grace and truth*—Which he had already mentioned, and which were to be the subject of the book which he was now writing, came to all mankind through Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of the new covenant, as Moses was of the old.

The law of Moses, however excellent in itself, was little in comparison of the gospel: As it proceeded from the justice and holiness of God, and was intended to convict men of sin, that the way of the gospel might be the better prepared, it was a law of rigour, condemnation, and death. It was a law of shadows, types, and figures; and incapable of expiating sin by its sacrifices: But Christ has brought that grace which is opposed to condemnation: And he is

himself the spirit and substance of all those shadows.

6. *Jesus Christ*—Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, or anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, sent from heaven. Man by nature is in want and poverty, in abjectness and weakness, in darkness and ignorance, in straits and captivity, in wretchedness and infamy. His Redeemer is called Jesus; he who looses, enlarges, and endows with salvation. (1.) He enriches man's poverty: (2.) Strengthens his weakness: (3.) Teaches his ignorance: (4.) Brings him out of straits and difficulties: And, (5.) Raises him to happiness, beatitude, and glory. And the aggregate of these is salvation.

7. *No man hath seen God at any time*—Moses and others heard his voice, and saw the cloud and the fire, which were the symbols of his presence; but such a manifestation of God as had now taken place, in the person of Jesus Christ, had never before been exhibited to the world.

8. *And this is the record of John*—He persisted in this assertion, testifying to the Jews that this Jesus was the Christ.

9. *He confessed, and denied not; but confessed*—John renounces himself, that Jesus may be all in all. Though God had highly honoured him, and favoured him with peculiar influence in the discharge of his work, yet he considered he had nothing but what he had received, and therefore, giving all praise to his Benefactor, takes care to direct the attention of the people to him alone from whom he had received his mercies. He who makes use of God's gifts to feed and strengthen his pride and vanity, will be sure to be stripped of the goods wherein he trusts, and fall down into the condemnation of the devil. We have nothing but what we have received; and we deserve nothing of what we possess; and it is only God's infinite mercy which keeps us in the possession of the blessings which we now enjoy.

10. *I am not*—I am not the prophet which you expect, nor Elijah: Though he was the Elijah that was to come; for in the spirit and power of that eminent prophet he came, proclaiming the necessity of reformation in Israel.

SECTION XXII.—JOHN INTRODUCES SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES TO CHRIST.

A. D. 26.

JOHN I. 29—42.

THE next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God,¹ which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: For he was before me. And I knew him not: But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: But he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me,² Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus³ as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!⁴ And the two disciples heard him⁵ speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?⁶ They said unto him, Rabbi,⁷ (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?⁸ He saith unto them, Come and see.⁹ They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: For it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon,¹⁰ and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

1. *Behold the Lamb of God, &c.*—Jesus was the true Lamb, or Sacrifice, required and appointed by God, of which, those offered daily in the tabernacle and temple, and especially the paschal lamb, were only the types and representatives. The continual morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb, under the Jewish law, was intended to point out the continual efficacy of the blood of atonement; for even at the throne of God, Jesus Christ is ever represented as a Lamb newly slain. But John, pointing to Christ, calls him, emphatically, “the Lamb of God.” All the lambs which had been hitherto offered had been furnished

by men; this was provided by God, as the only sufficient and available sacrifice for the sin of the world. In three essential respects, this Lamb differed from those by which it was represented. (1.) It was the “Lamb of God;” the most excellent, and the most available. (2.) It made an atonement for sin; it carried sin away in reality, the others only representatively. (3.) It carried away the sin of the world; whereas the other was offered only on behalf of the Jewish people.

2. *He that sent me said unto me.*—From this we may clearly perceive, that John had a most intimate acquaintance

with the Divine Being; and received not only his call and mission at first, but every subsequent direction, by immediate, unequivocal inspiration. Who is fit to proclaim Jesus, but he who has continual intercourse with God; who is constantly receiving light and life from Christ their Fountain; who bears a steady, uniform testimony to Jesus, even in the presence of his enemies; and who, at all times, abases himself, that Jesus alone may be magnified? Reformation of manners, and salvation of souls, will accompany such a person's labours whithersoever he goeth.

3. *And looking upon Jesus*—"Attentively beholding." He who desires to discover the glories and excellencies of this Lamb of God, must thus look on him. At first sight, he appears only as a man among men, and as dying in testimony to the truth, as many others have died. But on a more attentive consideration, he appears to be no less than God manifest in the flesh, and, by his death, making an atonement for the sin of the world.

4. *Behold the Lamb of God!*—By this the Baptist designed to direct the attention of his own disciples to Jesus, not only as the great Sacrifice for the sin of the world, but also as the complete Teacher of heavenly truth.

5. *And the two disciples heard him*—And they perfectly understood their master's meaning; in consequence of which, they followed Jesus. Happy they who, on hearing of the salvation of Christ, immediately attach themselves to its Author! Delays are always dangerous; and, in this case, often fatal. Reader, hast thou ever had Christ, as a Sacrifice for thy sin, pointed out unto thee? If so, hast thou followed him? If not, thou art not in the way to the kingdom of God. Lose not another moment. Eternity is at hand, and thou art not prepared to meet thy God. Pray that he may alarm thy conscience, and stir up thy soul, to seek till thou have found.

6. *What seek ye?*—These disciples might have felt some embarrassment in addressing our blessed Lord, after hearing the character which the Baptist gave of him; to remove or prevent this, he graciously accosts them, and gives them an opportunity of explaining themselves to him. Such questions, we may conceive,

the blessed Jesus still puts to those who, in simplicity of heart, desire an acquaintance with him. A question of this nature we may profitably ask ourselves, "What seek ye?" In this place? In the company you frequent? In the conversation you engage in? In the affairs with which you are occupied? In the works which you perform? Do you seek the humiliation, illumination, justification, edification, or sanctification of your soul? the edification of your neighbour? the good of the church of Christ? or the glory of God? Questions of this nature, often put to our hearts, in the fear of God, would induce us to do many things which we now leave undone, and to leave undone many things which we now perform.

7. *Rabbi*—"Teacher." Behold the modesty of these disciples: "We wish to be scholars; we are ignorant; we desire to be taught. We believe thou art a Teacher come from God."

8. *Where dwellest thou?*—That we may come and receive thy instructions.

9. *Come and see*—If those who know not the salvation of God would come at the command of Christ, they should soon see that with him is the fountain of life, and in his light they should see light. Reader, if thou art seriously inquiring where Christ dwelleth, take the following for answer: He dwells not in the tumult of worldly affairs, nor in profane assemblies, nor in worldly pleasures, nor in the place where drunkards proclaim their shame, nor in carelessness and indolence; but he is found in his temple; wherever two or three are gathered together in his name; in secret prayer; in self-denial; in fasting; in self-examination. He also dwells in the humble, contrite spirit; in the spirit of faith, of love, of forgiveness, of universal obedience; in a word, he dwells in the heaven of heavens; whither he graciously purposes to bring thee, if thou wilt come and learn of him, and receive the salvation which he has bought for thee by his own blood.

10. *Findeth his own brother Simon*—Every discovery of the gospel of the Son of God produces benevolence, and leads those to whom it is made to communicate it to others. Those who find Jesus, find in him a treasure of wisdom and knowledge, through which they may not only become

rich themselves, but be instruments, in the hand of God, of enriching others. These disciples, having tasted the good word of Christ, were not willing to eat their bread alone, but went and invited others to partake with them. Thus the knowledge of Christ became diffused; one invited another to "come and see;" Jesus received all,

and the number of disciples was increased, and the attentive hearers were innumerable. Every man who has been brought to an acquaintance with God, should endeavour to bring, at least, another with him; and his first attention should be fixed upon those of his own household.

SECTION XXIII.—THE CALL OF PHILIP—CHRIST'S INTERVIEW WITH NATHANAEL.

A.D. 26.

JOHN I. 43—51.

THE day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip,¹ and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael,² and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.³ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed,⁴ in whom is no guile!⁵ Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?⁶ Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree,⁷ I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God;⁸ thou art the King of Israel.⁹ Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee¹⁰ under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open,¹¹ and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

1. *Philip*—This apostle was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee.

2. *Nathanael*—This apostle is supposed to be the same with Bartholomew, which is very likely, for these reasons: (1.) That the evangelists who mention Bartholomew say nothing of Nathanael; and that St. John, who speaks of Nathanael, says nothing of Bartholomew. (2.) No notice is taken any where of Bartholomew's vocation, unless his and that of Nathanael mentioned here be the same. (3.) The name of Bartholomew is not a proper name; it signifies the "son of Ptolemy;" and Nathanael might have been his own name. (4.) St. John seems to rank Nathanael with the

apostles, when he says that Peter and Thomas, the two sons of Zebedee, Nathanael, and two other disciples, being gone a fishing, Jesus showed himself to them.

3. *Come and see*—He who candidly examines the evidences of the religion of Christ will infallibly become a believer. No history ever published among men has so many external and internal proofs of authenticity as this has. A man should judge of nothing by first appearances, or human prejudices. Who are they who cry out, "The Bible is a fable?" Those who have never read it, or read it only with the fixed purpose to gainsay it. I once met with a person who professed to disbelieve

every tittle of the New Testament, a chapter of which, he acknowledged, he had never read. I asked him, had he ever read the Old: He answered, "No!" And yet this man had the assurance to reject the whole as an imposture! God has mercy on those whose ignorance leads them to form prejudices against the truth; but he confounds those who take them up through envy and malice, and endeavour to communicate them to others.

"How cautiously should we guard against popular prejudices! When these had once possessed so honest a heart as even that of Nathanael, they led him to suspect the blessed Jesus himself for an impostor, because he had been brought up at Nazareth. But his integrity prevailed over that foolish bias, and laid him open to the force of evidence, which a candid inquirer will always be glad to admit, even when it brings the most unexpected discoveries."—WESLEY.

4. *Behold an Israelite indeed*—A worthy descendant of the patriarch Jacob, who not only professes to believe in Israel's God, but who worships him in sincerity and truth, according to his light.

5. *In whom is no guile!*—Deceitfulness ever has been, and still is, the deeply-marked characteristic of the Jewish people. To find a man, living in the midst of so much corruption, walking in uprightness before his Maker, was a subject worthy the attention of God himself. Behold this man! and, while you see and admire, imitate his conduct.

6. *Whence knowest thou me?*—He was not yet acquainted with the divinity of Christ, could not conceive that he could search his heart, and therefore asks how he could acquire this knowledge of him, or who had given him that character. It is the comfort of the sincere and upright, that God knows their hearts; and it should be the terror of the deceitful and of the hypocrite, that their false-dealing is ever noticed by the all-seeing eye of God.

7. *Under the fig-tree*—Probably engaged in prayer with God, for the speedy appearing of the salvation of Israel; and the shade of this fig-tree was perhaps the ordinary place of retreat for this upright man. How true is the saying, "The eyes of the Lord are through all the earth, beholding the

evil and the good!" Whosoever we are, whatsoever we are about, may a deep conviction of this truth rest upon our hearts, "Thou God seest me!"

8. *Thou art the Son of God*—The promised Messiah.

9. *Thou art the King of Israel*—The real descendant of David, who art to sit on that spiritual throne of which the throne of David was the type.

10. *Because I said, I saw thee, &c.*—As thou hast credited my divine mission on this simple proof, that I saw thee when and where no human eye, placed where mine was, could see thee; thy faith shall not rest merely upon this; for "thou shalt see greater things than these;" more numerous and express proofs of my eternal power and Godhead.

11. *Heaven open*—This seems to be a figurative expression: (1.) Christ may be understood by this saying to mean, that a clear and abundant revelation of God's will should be now made unto men; that heaven itself should be laid as it were open, and all the mysteries which had been shut up and hidden in it from eternity, relative to the salvation and glorification of man, should be now fully revealed. (2.) That by the "angels of God ascending and descending," is to be understood, that a perpetual intercourse should now be opened between heaven and earth, through the medium of Christ, who was "God manifested in the flesh." What a glorious view does this give us of the gospel dispensation! It is heaven opened to earth; and heaven opened on earth: The church militant and the church triumphant become one, and the whole heavenly family, in both, see and adore their common Lord. Neither the world nor the church is left to the caprices of time or chance. The Son of Man governs as he upholds all. Wherever we are praying, studying, hearing, meditating, his gracious eye is upon us. He notes our wants, our weakness, and our petitions; and his eye affects his heart. Let us be without guile, deeply, habitually sincere, serious, and upright; and then we may rest assured, that not only the eye, but the hand, of our Lord shall be ever upon us for good. Happy the man whose heart can rejoice in the reflection, "Thou God seest me!"

SECTION XXIV.—THE MIRACLE AT CANA IN GALILEE.

A. D. 27.

JOHN II. 1—11.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee ; and the mother of Jesus was there : And both Jesus was called, and his disciples,¹ to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.² Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee ?³ mine hour is not yet come.⁴ His mother saith⁵ unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*.⁶ When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was : (But the servants which drew the water knew ;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine ; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : *But* thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles⁷ did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory ;⁸ and his disciples believed on him.⁹

1. *And both Jesus was called, and his disciples*—There are several remarkable circumstances here. (1.) This was probably the first Christian wedding that was ever in the world. (2.) The great Author of the Christian religion, with his disciples, was invited to it. (3.) The first miracle Jesus Christ wrought was at it, and in honour of it. (4.) The mother of Christ, the most pure of all virgins, the most holy of all wives, and the first Christian mother, was also at it. (5.) The marriage was according to God, or these holy persons would not have attended it. (6.) The bride and bridegroom must have been a holy pair, otherwise they would have had nothing to do with such holy company.

Marriage is ever honourable in itself ; but it is not at all times used honourably. Where Jesus is not invited to bless the union, no good can be expected ; and where the disciples of sin and satan are preferred to the disciples of Christ, on such occasions, it is a melancholy intimation

that so bad a beginning will have a bad ending. I am afraid we may search long, before we find a marriage conducted on such principles as this appears to have been, even among those who make more than a common profession of the religion of Christ.

2. *They have no wine*—Though the blessed virgin is supposed to have never seen her son work a miracle before this time, yet she seems to have expected him to do something extraordinary on this occasion ; as, from her acquaintance with him, she must have formed some adequate idea of his power and goodness.

3. *Woman, what have I to do with thee ?*—“ O woman, what is this to thee and me ? ” This is an abrupt denial, as if he had said, “ We are not employed to provide the necessaries for this feast : This matter belongs to others, who should have made a proper and sufficient provision for the persons they had invited.” The words seem to convey a reproof to the virgin, for

meddling with that which did not particularly concern her. The holiest persons are always liable to errors of judgment; and should ever conduct themselves with modesty and humility, especially in those things in which the providence of God is particularly concerned. But here, indeed, there appears to be no blame. It is very likely the bride or bridegroom's family were relatives of the blessed virgin; and she would naturally suppose that our Lord would feel interested for the honour and comfort of the family, and, knowing that he possessed extraordinary power, made this application to him to come forward to their assistance. Our Lord's answer to his mother is far from being disrespectful.

4. *My hour is not yet come*—My time for working a miracle is not yet fully come. What I do, I do when necessary, and not before. Nature is unsteady, full of haste; and ever blundering, in consequence. It is the folly and sin of men that they are ever finding fault with the divine providence. According to them, God never does any thing in due time; he is too early or too late: Whereas it is utterly impossible for the divine wisdom to forestall itself; or for the divine goodness to delay what is necessary.

5. *His mother saith, &c.*—The virgin seems to have understood our Lord as hinted above. It was not yet time to grant them a supply, because the want had not as yet been generally felt. But, silently receiving the respectful caution, she saw that the miracle should be wrought when it best suited the purposes of the divine wisdom.

6. *And they bare it*—A question has been asked, "Did our Lord turn all the water into wine which the six measures contained?" To which I answer: There

is no proof that he did; and I take it for granted that he did not. It may be asked, "How could a part be turned into wine, and not the whole?" To which I answer: The water, in all likelihood, was changed into wine as it was drawn out, and not otherwise. "But did not our Lord by this miracle minister to vice, by producing an excess of inebriating liquor?" No; for the following reasons: (1.) The company was a select and holy company, where no excess could be permitted. And, (2.) Our Lord does not appear to have furnished any extra quantity, but only what was necessary. "But it is intimated in the text, that the guests were nearly intoxicated before this miraculous addition to their wine took place; for the evangelist says, 'When they have become intoxicated.'" I answer: (1.) It is not intimated, even in the most indirect manner, that these guests were at all intoxicated. (2.) The words are not spoken of the persons at that wedding at all: The governor of the feast only states that such was the common custom at feasts of this nature; without intimating that any such custom prevailed there. (3.) The original word bears a widely different meaning from that which the objection forces upon it.

7. *This beginning of miracles*—It was probably the first he ever wrought: At any rate, it was the first he wrought after his baptism, and the first he wrought publicly.

8. *His glory*—His supreme divinity.

9. *His disciples believed on him*—Were more abundantly confirmed in their faith, that he was either the promised Messiah, or a most extraordinary prophet, in the fullest intercourse with the ever-blessed God.

SECTION XXV.—CHRIST PURGES THE TEMPLE.

A. D. 27.

JOHN II. 12—25.

AFTER this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: And they continued there not many days. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen¹ and

sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.² When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture,³ and the word which Jesus had said. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name,⁴ when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*,⁵ and needed not that any should testify of man: For he knew what was in man.

1. *Found in the temple those that sold oxen*—The vindication of God's house from profanation was the first and the last care of our Lord; and it is probable he began and finished his public ministry by this significant act.

"This was, (1.) To alienate that which was dedicated to the honour of God; was sacrilege; it was robbing God. (2.) It was to debase that which was solemn and awful, and to make it mean. (3.) It was to disturb and distract those services in which men ought to be most solemn, serious, and intent. (4.) It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest."—HENRY.

"Profane, unprofitable, and criminal discourse, indecent postures, a scandalous unseemliness in dress, lascivious glances, meetings about business, sinful assignations, and vain, extravagant, and wicked thoughts; these are much more insupportable in the sight and temple of God, than either those creatures which were designed for sacrifice, or than the bare trading in things of the like nature."—QUESNELLE.

"Many have been of opinion, that a

dazzling lustre beamed from the person of our Lord which overawed and intimidated the mercenary traffickers; and that it is difficult otherwise to account for these extraordinary circumstances: That one man should have attempted and executed a work so difficult,—one man without any order from Herod or from the rulers, and without any assistance from his friends, should drive out of the temple a sacrilegious herd with the shaking of a single scourge of rushes! And especially when we consider that they were many; that they had a common interest to bind them to each other; that they had possession of the ground, and the sanction of the higher powers; and yet, without attempting to reason or resist, they fled before him all ashamed and confounded."—S. D.

2. *Of the temple of his body*—Rather, "the temple, his body:" his body had no particular temple; but it was the temple of his Divinity; the place in which, as in the ancient temple, his Godhead dwelt.

3. *They believed the scripture*—The scripture which the evangelist immediately refers to, may have been Psalm xvi. 10.

It is the property of many prophecies

never to be understood except by their accomplishment; but these are so marked that, when their fulfilment takes place, they cannot be misunderstood, or applied to any other event.

4. *Many believed in his name*—They believed him to be the promised Messiah, but did not believe in him to the salvation of their souls; for we find, from the following verse, that their hearts were not at all changed, because our blessed Lord could not trust himself to them.

5. *He knew all men*—Jesus knew all things; and why? Because he made all things, and because he was the all-wise God; and he knew all men, because he alone searches the heart, and tries the reins. He knows who are sincere, and who are hypocritical; he knows those in whom he can confide, and those to whom

he can neither trust himself nor his gifts. Reader, he also knows thee: Thy cares, fears, perplexities, temptations, afflictions, desires, and hopes; thy helps and hindrances; the progress thou hast made in the divine life, or thy declension from it. If he know thee to be hypocritical or iniquitous, he looks upon thee with abhorrence: If he know thee to be of a meek and broken spirit, he looks on thee with pity, complacency, and delight. Take courage; thou canst say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I do love thee, and mourn because I love and serve thee so little:" Then expect him to come in unto thee, and make his abode with thee: While thy eye and heart are simple, he will love thee, and thy whole soul shall be full of light. To him be glory and dominion for ever!

SECTION XXVI.—CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH NICODEMUS.

A. D. 27.

JOHN III. 1—10.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night,¹ and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered² and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again,³ he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?⁴ can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,⁵ he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh;⁶ and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth⁷ 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. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?⁸ Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?⁹

1. *Came to Jesus by night*—He had matters of the utmost importance, on which he wished to consult Christ; and he chose

the night season, perhaps less through the fear of man than through a desire to have Jesus alone, as he found him all the day

encompassed with the multitude ; so that it was impossible for him to get an opportunity to speak fully on those weighty affairs concerning which he intended to consult him. However, we may take it for granted, that he had no design at present to become his disciple ; as baptism and circumcision, which were the initiating ordinances among the Jews, were never administered in the night time. If any person received baptism by night, he was not acknowledged for a proselyte.

2. *Jesus answered*—Not in the language of compliment : He saw the state of Nicodemus's soul, and he immediately addressed himself to him on a subject the most interesting and important. But what connexion is there between our Lord's reply, and the address of Nicodemus ? Probably our Lord saw that the object of his visit was to inquire about the Messiah's kingdom ; and, in reference to this, he immediately says, "Except a man be born again," &c.

3. *Be born again*—Or, "from above." Different to that new birth which the Jews supposed every baptized proselyte enjoyed ; for they held that the Gentile, who became a proselyte, was like a child new born. This birth was of water from below ; the birth for which Christ contends is "from above ;" by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Every man must have two births, one from heaven, the other from earth ; one of his body, the other of his soul : Without the first he cannot see nor enjoy this world, without the last he cannot see nor enjoy the kingdom of God. As there is an absolute necessity that a child should be born into the world, that he may see its light, contemplate its glories, and enjoy its good, so there is an absolute necessity that the soul should be brought out of its state of darkness and sin, through the light and power of the grace of Christ, that it may be able to see, or to discern, the glories and excellencies of the kingdom of Christ here, and be prepared for the enjoyment of the kingdom of glory hereafter. The Jews had some general notion of the new birth ; but, like many among Christians, they put the acts of proselytism, baptism, &c., in the place of the Holy Spirit and his influences. They acknowledged that a man must be born again ; but they made that new birth to consist in profession, confession, and

external washing. The new birth which is here spoken of comprehends, not only what is termed justification or pardon, but also sanctification or holiness. Sin must be pardoned, and the impurity of the heart washed away, before any soul can possibly enter into the kingdom of God. As this new birth implies the renewing of the whole soul in righteousness and true holiness, it is not a matter that may be dispensed with. Heaven is a place of holiness, and nothing but what is like itself can ever enter into it.

4. *How can a man be born when he is old ?*—It is probable that Nicodemus was pretty far advanced in age at this time ; and from his answer we may plainly perceive that, like the rest of the Jews, and like multitudes of Christians, he rested in the letter, without paying proper attention to the spirit ; the shadow, without the thing signified, had hitherto satisfied him. Our Lord knew him to be in this state, and this was the cause of his pointed address to him.

5. *Of water and of the Spirit*—To the baptism of water a man was admitted when he became a proselyte to the Jewish religion ; and, in this baptism, he promised in the most solemn manner to renounce idolatry, to take the God of Israel for his God, and to have his life conformed to the precepts of the divine law. But the water which was used on the occasion was only an emblem of the Holy Spirit. The soul was considered as in a state of defilement, because of past sin : Now, as by that water the body was washed, cleansed, and refreshed, so, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, the soul was to be purified from its defilement, and strengthened to walk in the way of truth and holiness.

When John came baptizing with water, he gave the Jews the plainest intimations that this would not suffice ; that it was only typical of that baptism of the Holy Ghost, under the similitude of fire, which they must all receive from Jesus Christ. Therefore, our Lord asserts that a man must be "born of water and the Spirit," that is, of the Holy Ghost, which, represented under the similitude of water, cleanses, refreshes, and purifies the soul. Reader, hast thou never had any other baptism than that of water ? If thou hast

not had any other, take Jesus Christ's word for it, thou canst not, in thy present state, enter into the kingdom of God. I would not say to thee merely, Read what it is to be born of the Spirit; but pray, O pray to God incessantly, till he give thee to feel what is implied in it! Remember, it is Jesus only who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. He who receives not this baptism has neither right nor title to the kingdom of God; nor can he, with any propriety, be termed a Christian, because that which essentially distinguished the Christian dispensation from that of the Jews was, that its Author baptized all his followers with the Holy Ghost.

Though baptism by water, into the Christian faith, was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah, it is not necessary that by water and the Spirit (in this place) we should understand two different things: It is probably only an elliptical form of speech, for the Holy Spirit under the similitude of water; as "the Holy Ghost and fire" do not mean two things, but one, namely, the Holy Ghost under the similitude of fire, pervading every part, refining and purifying the whole.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*—This is the answer to the objection made by Nicodemus, "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord here intimates that, were even this possible, it would not answer the end; for the plant will ever be of the nature of the seed that produces it—like will beget its like. The kingdom of God is spiritual and holy; and that which is born of the Spirit resembles the Spirit; for as he is who beget, so is he who is begotten of him. Therefore, the spiritual regeneration is essentially necessary to prepare the soul for a holy and spiritual kingdom.

7. *The wind bloweth.*—Though the manner in which this new birth is effected by the Divine Spirit be incomprehensible to us, yet we must not, on this ground, suppose it to be impossible. The wind blows in a variety of directions; we hear its sound, perceive its operation in the motion of the trees, &c., and feel it on ourselves, but we cannot discern the air itself; we only know that it exists by the effects which it pro-

duces. "So is every one who is born of the Spirit:" The effects are as discernible, and as sensible, as those of the wind; but itself we cannot see. But he who is born of God knows that he is thus born; "the Spirit itself," the grand agent in this new birth, "beareth witness with his spirit, that he is born of God," for "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." And so does this Spirit work in and by him, that others, though they see not the principle, can easily discern the change produced; for "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

8. *How can these things be?*—Our Lord had very plainly told him how these things could be, and illustrated the new birth by one of the most proper similes that could be chosen; but so intent was this great man on making every thing submit to the testimony of his senses that he appears unwilling to believe any thing, unless he can comprehend it. This is the case with many; they profess to believe because they comprehend; but they are impostors who speak thus. There is not a man in the universe that can fully comprehend one operation either of God or his instrument nature; and yet they must believe, and do believe, though they never did nor ever can fully comprehend, or account for, the objects of their faith.

9. *Art thou a master of Israel? &c.*—Hast thou taken upon thee to guide the blind into the way of truth; and yet knowest not that truth thyself? Dost thou command proselytes to be baptized with water, as an emblem of a new birth; and art thou unacquainted with the cause, necessity, nature, and effects of that new birth? How many masters are there still in Israel who are, in this respect, deplorably ignorant; and, strange to tell, publish their ignorance and folly in the sight of the sun, by writing and speaking against the thing itself! It is strange that such people cannot keep their own secret.

"But water-baptism is this new birth." No. Jesus tells you, a man must be born of water and the Spirit; and the water, and its effects upon the body, differ as much from this Spirit, which it is intended to represent, and the effects produced in the soul, as real fire does from painted flame.

SECTION XXVII.—FAITH NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

A. D. 27.

JOHN III. 11—21.

VERILY, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know,¹ and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.² If I have told you earthly things,³ and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended⁴ up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven,⁵ even the Son of man which is in heaven.⁶ And as Moses lifted up⁷ the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world,⁸ that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: But he that believeth not⁹ is condemned already,¹⁰ because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation,¹¹ that light is come¹² into the world, and men loved darkness¹³ rather than light, because their deeds were evil.¹⁴ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.¹⁵

1. *We speak that we do know*—I and my disciples do not profess to teach a religion which we do not understand nor exemplify in our conduct: A strong but delicate reproof to Nicodemus, who, though a master of Israel, did not understand the very rudiments of the doctrine of salvation. He was ignorant of the nature of the new birth. How wretched is the lot of that minister who, while he professes to recommend the salvation of God to others, is all the while dealing in the meagre, unfruitful traffic of an unfelt truth! Let such either acquire the knowledge of the grace of God themselves, or cease to proclaim it.

2. *Ye receive not our witness*—It was deemed criminal among the Jews to question or depart from the authority of their teachers. Nicodemus grants that our Lord is a Teacher come from God, and yet scruples to receive his testimony relative to the new birth, and the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom.

3. *If I have told you earthly things*—If, after I have illustrated this new birth by a most expressive metaphor, taken from earthly things, and, after all, you believe not; how can you believe should I tell you of heavenly things, in such language as angels use, where earthly images and illustrations can have no place? Or, if you, a teacher in Israel, do not understand the nature of such an earthly thing, or custom of the kingdom established over the Jewish nation, as being born of baptism, practised every day in the initiation of proselytes, how will you understand such heavenly things as the initiation of my disciples by the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire from heaven, if I should proceed further on the subject?

4. *No man hath ascended*—This seems a figurative expression, for, "No man hath known the mysteries of the kingdom of God." And the expression is founded upon this generally received maxim: That to be

perfectly acquainted with the concerns of a place, it is necessary for a person to be on the spot. But our Lord probably spoke to correct a false notion among the Jews, namely, that Moses had ascended to heaven in order to get the law. It is not Moses who is to be heard now, but Jesus. Moses did not ascend to heaven; but the Son of Man is come down from heaven to reveal the divine will.

5. *That came down*—The incarnation of Christ is represented under the notion of his coming down from heaven, to dwell upon earth.

6. *Which is in heaven*—Lest a wrong meaning should be taken from the foregoing expression, and it should be imagined that, in order to manifest himself upon earth, he must necessarily leave heaven; our blessed Lord qualifies it by adding, “the Son of Man who is in heaven;” pointing out, by this, the ubiquity, or omnipresence, of his nature: A character essentially belonging to God; for no being can possibly exist in more places than one at a time, but He who fills the heavens and the earth.

7. *As Moses lifted up*—He shows the reason why he descended from heaven: That he might be “lifted up,” that is, crucified, for the salvation of mankind; and be, by the appointment of God, as certain a remedy for sinful souls as the brazen serpent, elevated on a pole, was for the bodies of the Israelites which had been bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness.

Among the Jews, the brazen serpent was considered a type of the resurrection: Through it the dying lived. And so, by the voice of God, they that were dead shall be raised to life. As the serpent was raised up, so shall Christ be lifted up; as they who were stung by the fiery serpents were restored by looking up to the brazen serpent, so those who are infected with, and dying through, sin, are healed and saved by looking up to, and believing in, Christ crucified. The lifting up of the Son of Man may refer to his mediatorial office at the right hand of God.

8. *For God so loved the world*—Such a love as that which induced God to give his only-begotten Son to die for the world, could not be described; Jesus Christ does not attempt it. He has put an eternity of meaning in the particle, “so,” and left a subject for everlasting contemplation, won-

der, and praise, to angels and to men. The same evangelist uses a similar mode of expression, 1 epistle iii. 1: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”

From the subject before him, let the reader attend to the following particulars:—

(1.) The world was in a ruinous, condemned state, about to perish everlastingly; and was utterly without power to rescue itself from destruction.

(2.) That God, through the impulse of his eternal love, provided for its rescue and salvation, by giving his Son to die for it.

(3.) That the sacrifice of Jesus was the only mean by which the redemption of man could be effected, and that it is absolutely sufficient to accomplish this gracious design. For it would have been inconsistent with the wisdom of God to have appointed a sacrifice greater in itself, or less in its merit, than what the urgent necessities of the case required.

(4.) That sin must be an indescribable evil, when it required no less a sacrifice, to make atonement for it, than “God manifested in the flesh.”

(5.) That no man is saved through this sacrifice but he who believes, that is, who credits what God has spoken concerning Christ; his sacrifice, the end for which it was offered, and the way in which it is to be applied in order to become effectual.

(6.) That those who believe receive a double benefit: (i.) They are exempted from eternal perdition: “That they may not perish.” (ii.) They are brought to eternal glory: “That they may have everlasting life.” These two benefits point out tacitly the state of man: He is guilty, and therefore exposed to punishment; he is impure, and therefore unfit for glory.

They point out, also, the two grand operations of grace by which the salvation of man is effected: (i.) Justification, by which the guilt of sin is removed, and, consequently, the person is no longer obnoxious to perdition. (ii.) Sanctification, or the purification of his nature, by which he is properly fitted for the kingdom of glory.

9. *But he that believeth not*—When the gospel is preached to him, and the way of salvation made plain.

10. *Is condemned already*—Continues under the condemnation which divine jus-

tice has passed upon all sinners; and has this superadded, "He hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God:" And therefore is guilty of the grossest insult to the Divine Majesty, in neglecting, slighting, and despising the salvation which the infinite mercy of God had provided for him.

11. *This is the condemnation*—That is, this is the reason why any shall be found finally to perish; not that they came into the world with a perverted and corrupt nature, which is true; nor that they lived many years in the practice of sin, which is also true; but because they refused to receive the salvation which God sent to them.

12. *Light is come*—That is, Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, the Fountain of Light and Life; diffusing his benign influences every where, and favouring men with a clear and full revelation of the divine will.

13. *Men loved darkness*—Have preferred sin to holiness, Bellial to Christ, and hell to heaven.

14. *Because their deeds were evil*—An allusion to robbers and cut-throats, who practise their abominations in the night season, for fear of being detected. The sun is a common blessing to the human race; it shines to all, envies none, and calls all to necessary labour. If any one choose rather to sleep by day, that he may rob and murder in the night season, he does this to his own peril, and has no excuse; his punishment is the necessary consequence of his own unconstrained actions. So will the punishment of ungodly men be. There was light, they refused to walk in it; they chose to walk in the darkness, that they might do the works of darkness; they broke the divine law, refused the mercy offered to them, are arrested by divine justice, convicted, condemned, and punished. Whence, then, does their damnation proceed? From themselves.

"We cannot attentively review mankind in general without being compelled to ad-

mit one of the following things: Either that the Governor of the world is not a holy being, or that it is not his will that the subjects of his moral government should resemble him; or if it be his will that they should resemble him, he has not clearly revealed it; or if he has clearly revealed it, that the subjects of his moral government are deeply depraved, and guilty of direct rebellion against God; for nothing can be more obvious than that the world lieth in the wicked one. To which of these causes must we ascribe this wickedness? To the first,—'that God is not a holy being?' Impossible; for he is 'the High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy, and who dwelleth in the high and holy place,' and who is 'glorious in holiness.' Shall we ascribe it to the second,—'that it is not his will that the subjects of his moral government should resemble him?' Equally impossible. This would be to suppose, that infinite wisdom could take pleasure in folly; infinite purity, in pollution; infinite order, in anarchy; and infinite benevolence, in misery. Shall we trace it to the third,—'that he has not clearly revealed his will?' The sacred scriptures proclaim, as with one voice, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' Whence originates the wickedness which is in the world? Not in God, but in man: 'Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.'—JACOB STANLEY.

15. *Wrought in God*—In his presence, and through his assistance. This is the end of our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus; and though we are not informed here of any good effects produced by it, yet we learn from other scriptures, that it had produced the most blessed effects in his mind, and that from this time he became a disciple of Christ. He publicly defended our Lord in the sanhedrim, of which he was probably a member, and, with Joseph of Arimathea, gave him an honourable funeral, when all his bosom friends had deserted him.

SECTION XXVIII.—JOHN'S LAST TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

A. D. 27.

JOHN III. 22—36.

AFTER these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa ; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there : And they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between *some of* John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing,¹ except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : But the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice : This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase,² but I *must* decrease.³ He that cometh from above is above all :⁴ He that is of the earth⁵ is earthly, and speaketh of the earth :⁶ He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth ; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal⁷ that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : For God giveth not the Spirit by measure⁸ *unto him*. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.⁹ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life :¹⁰ And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.¹¹

1. *A man can receive nothing, &c.*—Or, "A man can receive nothing from heaven, unless it be given him." I have received, not only my commission, but the power also by which I have executed it, from above. As I took it up at God's command, so I am ready to lay it down when he pleases. I have told you from the beginning that I was only the fore-runner of the Messiah ; and was sent, not to form a separate party, but to point out to men that Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

2. *He must increase*—His present success is but the beginning of a most glorious and universal spread of righteousness, peace, truth, and good-will among men.

3. *I must decrease*—My baptism and teaching, as pointing out the coming Messiah, must cease ; because the Messiah is now come, and has entered publicly on the work of his glorious ministry.

4. *Is above all*—This blessed Bridegroom, who has descended from heaven, is above all, superior to Moses, the prophets, and me.

5. *He that is of the earth*—John himself, who was born in the common way of man.

6. *Speaketh of the earth*—Cannot speak of heavenly things as Christ can do ; and only represents divine matters by these earthly ordinances ; for the spirit and meaning of which, you must all go to the Messiah himself.

7. *Hath set to his seal*—That is, hath hereby confirmed the truth of the testimony which he has borne. As a testator sets his seal to an instrument in order to confirm it, and such instrument is considered as fully confirmed by having the testator's seal affixed to it; so I, by taking up this testimony of Christ, and proclaiming it to the Jews, have fully confirmed it, as I know it to be a truth; which knowledge I have from the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

8. *For God giveth not the Spirit by measure*—He is the most perfect of all teachers, as having received the Holy Spirit as none before him ever did. "Without measure;" not for a particular time, people, purpose, &c., but for the whole compass of time, and in reference to all eternity. Former dispensations of the Holy Spirit made partial discoveries of infinite justice and mercy; but now the sum of justice, in requiring such a sacrifice, and the plenitude of mercy, in providing it, shall, by that Spirit with which he baptizes, be made manifest to all the children of men. It is worthy of remark, that this was fully done after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

9. *All things into his hand*—A principal design of John is, to show that Christ was infinitely above every teacher, prophet, and divine messenger that had ever yet appeared. The prophets had various gifts: Some had visions, others dreams; some had the gift of teaching, others of comforting, &c.; but none possessed all these gifts: Christ alone possessed their plenitude, and is all things in all.

10. *Hath everlasting life*—He has already the seed of this life in his soul, having been made a partaker of the grace and Spirit of him in whom he has believed.

11. *But the wrath of God abideth on him*—"Punishment of God," that is, the

most heavy and awful of all punishments; such as sin deserves, and such as it becomes divine justice to inflict. And this "abideth on him;" endures as long as his unbelief and disobedience remain! And how shall these be removed in a hell of fire! Reader, pray God that thou mayest never know what this continuing punishment means!

"Every thing that John said of Jesus, instead of aggrandizing and exalting himself, tended to lower and debase him in the eyes of all the world; he assured the multitude, who followed him, that there was another person much more worthy to be followed; that there was one coming after him of far greater dignity and consequence than himself; one whose show's latchet he was not worthy to unloose; one so infinitely superior to him in rank, authority, and wisdom, that he was not fit to perform for him even the most servile offices. He himself was only come as a humble messenger to announce the arrival of his Lord, and smooth the way before him. But the great Personage to whom they were to direct their eyes, and in whom they were to centre all their hopes, was Jesus Christ. Is this the language of a man, who sought only for honour, emolument, or fame, or was actuated only by the fond ambition of being the head of a sect? No one can think so. It is not very usual, surely, for men of any character, much less for men of the best character, to invent and utter a string of falsehoods, with the professed design of degrading themselves and exalting some other person. Yet this was the plain tendency and avowed object of John's declarations; and the effect was exactly what might be expected, and what he wished and intended, namely, that great numbers deserted him and followed Christ."

—BISHOP PORTEUS.

SECTION XXIX.—THE IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XIV. 3—5; MARK VI. 17—20; LUKE III. 19, 20.

BUT Herod the tetrarch being reproved by him for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife, (for he had married her,) and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut

up John in prison. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.¹ Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude,² because they counted him as a prophet.

1. *For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*—Here is an instance of zeal, fidelity, and courage, highly worthy of imitation. Plainness, mildness, and modesty are qualifications necessary to be observed when we reprove the great. The best service a subject can render his prince is to lay before him, in the plainest but most respectful manner, what the law of God requires of him, and what it forbids. How unutterable must the punishment of those be who are chaplains to princes, or great men, and who either flatter them in their vices, or wink at their sins!

“He reproveth, without fear and without reserve, the abandoned and ferocious Herod, for injuriously taking away Herodias, his brother's wife, and afterwards incestuously marrying her, and for all the other evil that he had done. He well knew the savage and unrelenting temper of that sanguinary tyrant; he knew that this boldness of expostulation would, sooner or later, bring down upon him the whole weight of his resentment. But knowing also, that he was sent into the world to preach repentance to all, and feeling it his duty to “cry aloud and spare not,” to spare not even the greatest and most exalted of sinners, he determined not to shrink from that duty, but to obey his conscience, and take the consequences.”—BISHOP PORTEUS.

2. *He feared the multitude*—Miserable prince! who fears more to offend his people, than to sin against his God, by shedding innocent blood. When a man resists sin only by the help of human motives, he cannot long defend himself.

“John well deserved the veneration and esteem of Herod, when he thus took the freedom to perform this dangerous office of friendship, and to manifest a fidelity so

seldom to be found in courts, and indeed so often wanting elsewhere. A wise prince would have courted his friendship, and sought his advice; but he is at length rewarded with imprisonment and death. This good man was taken from his work, and laid aside in the midst of his days and usefulness; but he calmly acquiesced in the disposals of Providence, and no doubt carried along with him to his prison incomparably more happiness than his persecutors could find on the throne. In this confinement the prophet was not forgotten; but as if Herod had studied to increase his own torment, he must be sent for again and again to discourse before him. That he revered a man of such approved integrity, none can wonder: But while he would not be entirely reformed by his remonstrances, that he should hear him with pleasure, and do many things, is very surprising. Delusive pleasure! unprofitable reformation! while, whatsoever instances he gave of his regarding him, Herodias was retained. We cannot wonder if a reformation thus insincere and partial was but short-lived, and was followed at length by a grosser apostasy. Such was the influence of Herodias over him, that at her instigation Herod is prevailed upon to seek the death of that righteous and holy man, whose virtues he revered, and whose preaching he had attended with pleasure. But the fear of the people restrained him, though he was destitute of the fear of God, and had not any generous regard to men. Thus does God govern the world, and thus does he protect his church, by often making it the interest, even of the worst of men, to forbear those injuries and cruelties which the malignity of their natures might otherwise dictate.”—DODDRIDGE.

SECTION XXX.—CHRIST WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

A. D. 27.

JOHN IV. 1—26.

WHEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: *And* it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God,¹ and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.² The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: From whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.³ The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water,⁴ that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband,⁵ and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: In that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh,⁶ when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.⁷ Ye worship ye know not what:⁸ We know what we worship: For salvation is of the Jews.⁹ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in

spirit¹⁰ and in truth : For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit :¹¹ And they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh,¹² which is called Christ : When he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.¹³

1. *If thou knewest the gift of God*—A gift is any thing that is given, for which no equivalent has been or is to be returned : A free gift is that which has been given without asking or entreaty. Such a gift of kindness was Jesus Christ to the world ; and through him comes the gift of the Spirit, which those who believe on his name were to receive. Christ was not an object of desire to the world ; no man asked for him ; and God, moved thereto by his own eternal mercy, freely gave him. Through this great gift come the Holy Spirit, and all other gifts which are necessary to the salvation of a lost world.

2. *Living water*—By this expression is always meant spring water, in opposition to dead, stagnant water contained in ponds, pools, tanks, or cisterns ; and what our Lord means by it is evidently the Holy Spirit. As water quenches the thirst, refreshes and invigorates the body, purifies things defiled, and renders the earth fruitful ; so it is an apt emblem of the gift of the Holy Ghost, which so satisfies the souls that receive it that they thirst no more for earthly good : It purifies also from all spiritual defilement, on which account it is emphatically stiled the Holy Spirit ; and it makes those who receive it “ fruitful in every good word and work.”

3. *Springing up into everlasting life*—On this account he can never thirst ; for how can he lack water who has in himself a living, eternal spring ? By this water our Lord means also his doctrine, explaining and promising the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which proceed from Jesus Christ their Fountain, dwelling in a believing heart. There is no eternal life without the Spirit ; no Spirit without Christ ; and no Christ to give the Spirit, without dwelling in the heart : This his whole doctrine proclaims.

4. *Give me this water*—She did not as yet comprehend our Lord's meaning ; but her curiosity was much excited, and this was the design of our Lord, that he might

have her mind properly prepared to receive the great truths which he was about to announce.

5. *Call thy husband*—Our Lord appears to have spoken these words for two purposes : (1.) To make the woman consider her own state. (2.) To show her that he knew her heart, and the secret actions of her life ; and was therefore well qualified to teach her heavenly truths.

“ Jesus Christ did not speak thus because he was ignorant what sort of a life this woman lived. He knew that, to speak properly, she had no husband. It was a word of trial ; for the Lord said this to give her an opportunity of making a free confession, ‘ I have no husband.’ It was a word of kind reproof, for he intended to convince her of the sin in which she lived. It was a word of grace, for the censure tended to the woman's consolation. It was, farther, a word of wisdom ; for our Lord intended to take occasion from this meeting to discover himself to her, and more clearly to convince her, that he had a perfect knowledge of the secrets of her life ; as he presently proved, by saying, ‘ Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands ; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.’ ”—CLAUDE.

6. *The hour cometh, &c.*—The time was now at hand in which the spiritual worship of God was about to be established in the earth, and all the Jewish rites and ceremonies entirely abolished.

7. *Worship the Father*—This epithet shows the mild, benignant, and tender nature of the gospel dispensation. Men are called to worship their heavenly Father, and to consider themselves as his children. In reference to this, our Lord's prayer begins, “ Our Father, who art in heaven,” &c.

8. *Ye worship ye know not what*—The Samaritans believed in the same God with the Jews ; but, as they rejected all the prophetic writings, they had but an imperfect knowledge of the Deity : Beside,

as they incorporated the worship of idols with his worship, they might be justly said to worship him whom they did not properly know.

9. *Salvation is of the Jews*—The Messiah was to spring from the Jews; from them, the preaching of the gospel, and the knowledge of the truth, were to go to all the nations of the world. It was to the Jews that the promises were made; and it was in their prophetic scriptures, which the Samaritans rejected, that Jesus Christ was proclaimed and described.

10. *The true worshippers shall worship in spirit*—The worship of the Samaritans was a defective worship; they did not receive the prophetic writings: That of the Jews was a carnal worship, dealing only in the letter, and referring to the spirit and design, which were at a distance, by types and ceremonies. The gospel of Christ showed the meaning of all these carnal ordinances, and the legal sacrifices, which had all their consummation in his offering of himself: Thus a spiritual dispensation took place of the carnal one which prefigured it. The preaching of the gospel discovered the true nature of God, of salvation, of the human soul, of earthly and of heavenly things; and, because of this, it is put in opposition to the defective Samaritan worship.

11. *God is a Spirit*—This is one of the first, the greatest, the most sublime, and necessary truths in the compass of nature! There is a God, the Cause of all things, the Fountain of all perfection, without parts or dimensions, for he is eternal, filling the

heavens and the earth, pervading, governing, and upholding all things: For he is an infinite Spirit! This God can be pleased only with that which resembles himself: Therefore he must hate sin and sinfulness; and can delight in those only who are made partakers of his own divine nature. As all creatures were made by him, so all owe him obedience and reverence; but, to be acceptable to this infinite Spirit, the worship must be of a spiritual nature; must spring from the heart, through the influence of the Holy Ghost; and it must be "in truth," not only in sincerity, but performed according to that divine revelation which he has given men of himself. A man worships God in Spirit, when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he brings all his affections, appetites, and desires to the throne of God: And he worships him in truth, when every purpose and passion of his heart, and when every act of his religious worship, is guided and regulated by the word of God.

12. *I know that Messiah cometh*—Though they did not receive the prophetic writings, yet the tradition of the advent of the Messiah, which was common among the Jews, and founded on promises contained even in the books of Moses, was generally received among the Samaritans also.

13. *Jesus saith unto her, I am he*—Our Lord never spoke in such direct terms concerning himself to his own countrymen; nor even to his own disciples, till a little before his death.

SECTION XXXI.—CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT JACOB'S WELL.

A. D. 27.

JOHN IV. 27—42.

AND upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot,¹ and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did:² Is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said

unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.³ Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,⁴ and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: That both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: And he abode there two days.⁵ And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: For we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

1. *Left her waterpot*—She was so penetrated with the great truths which Jesus had announced, that she forgot her errand to the well, and returned to the city without the water for which she came out!

2. *All things that ever I did*—The Jews believed that one essential characteristic of the Messiah would be, that he should be able to tell the secrets of all hearts.

3. *I have meat to eat that ye know not of*—Our blessed Lord seizes every opportunity to raise the minds of his apostles to heavenly things, through the medium of earthly matters. Nor does he force these things into such service. Properly understood, earthly substances are the types, representatives, and shadows of heavenly things.

4. *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*—In these words, our blessed Lord teaches a lesson of zeal and earnestness to his apostles, and to all their successors in the Christian ministry. Let the salvation of souls lie nearer your heart than life itself. Let eating and drinking, labour and rest, reading, thinking, study, prayer, and all things, be directed to the accomplishment of this great work. Ministers of Jesus! imitate your Lord! Souls are perishing for lack of knowledge: God has

given you the key of the kingdom, the knowledge of his word: O open unto them the gate of life! They are dropping by thousands into hell! O pluck the brands out of the burning!

Already the heavenly sower, Jesus Christ, becomes the reaper of the produce of the seed which he had so lately sown; and receives the wages which he desired, the high gratification of saving immortal souls; and gathers in his fruit unto eternal life. So the sower and the reaper, who are here one and the same person, rejoiced together, having seen the seed-time and the harvest take place on the same day. The sower had not time to leave the field which he had sown, till it was full time to gather in the harvest.

5. *He abode there two days*—We are not told that he wrought any miracles among them; this does not appear to have been necessary: They were a simple-hearted, teachable people, and they credited him on the evidence of his own eternal truth. "Why are not miracles wrought now?" Miracles were only for the establishment of the doctrines of Christianity, where they were first preached; we profess to believe these doctrines; therefore, to us, miracles would be useless. Where the

doctrine is credited, no miracle is necessary. The Samaritans believed, and no miracle was wrought among them; for the simple reason—it was not necessary.

There are several particulars in the preceding history of the Samaritan woman which confirm the doctrine of a particular providence, and show how God manages the most common occurrences in order to accomplish the designs of his mercy and love. The gospel must be preached to the Samaritans: This is God's purpose; and, in this case, the wrath of man is caused to praise him.

(1.) Christ finds it necessary to quit Judea because of the persecution raised up against him by the scribes and Pharisees. How worthy of admiration is that divine providence that presses every thing into the accomplishment of its own designs! The doctors of Jerusalem oblige the Saviour to leave their city; and a simple woman persuades all the inhabitants of a Samaritan city to open their gates and their hearts, and entreat the Redeemer of the world to enter in.

(2.) Christ must pass through Samaria. He was so situated in Judea that he could not reach Galilee, except through Samaria, without taking a large circuit, which the necessities of the present case could not admit. Thus, while he appears to fly only from the fury of his persecutors, he is in reality seeking the lost, and fully accomplishing the work he came into the world to perform.

(3.) Christ being weary finds it necessary to sit down to rest himself by Jacob's well, spent with fatigue and hunger. How energetic was this fatigue! how active was this rest! Nothing can happen to Christ in vain; nothing can turn him out of the way of his mercy; his great work he continues to carry on, without the smallest interruption, where we would have thought it must have been necessarily suspended.

(4.) The disciples are obliged to go to the city to buy victuals, and Jesus was left alone. Even this circumstance was not only favourable to the conversion of the Samaritan woman, but even essentially necessary, as, without it, she could not have had that opportunity of conversing freely with our Lord; nor would it have been proper for him to have made that dis-

covery of himself, in their presence, which we find he did during their absence.

(5.) The Samaritan woman is induced at that very time to go and draw water. Even so small a circumstance as this becomes a necessary part in the economy of her salvation. There is not a circumstance in our life, not an occurrence in our business, but God will make subservient to our salvation, if we have a simple heart and a teachable spirit. The steps of a good man especially are ordered of the Lord; and, while he acknowledges his Maker in all his ways, he will direct all his steps. A proper consideration of this great truth will produce both confidence and humility.

(6.) But this blessed doctrine may be abused; for some may suppose that God always acts according to a fixed necessity, through which, whatsoever was, is, or will be, has had its existence, mode of being, operation, and direction, according to pre-determined irrevocable laws. This system makes God himself the necessary agent of eternal fate, as it supposes him to be constantly employed in doing what eternal necessity obliges him to perform; and thus his infinite freedom is bounded or acted upon by uncontrollable necessity. Perdition is not farther from glory than necessitating decrees are from a particular and gracious providence, by which the means of salvation are placed within the reach of every human being.

“There is no time to loiter and be idle. All things demand an unremitting industry. The requirements of God, and the miseries of man, plead for activity energetic and unceasing. We have but to look around on the fields to find a motive irresistible. Think of the vast extent yet unvisited and uncultivated; think of the immense multitudes who are perishing for lack of knowledge; think of the dark and dreadful destinies of eternity, the last habitation of souls; and can we rest? can we refuse the employment of all power of body and mind? We have heard the words of the Redeemer; let us take them for our own: ‘I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.’”

“And what a meeting will it be! To think of the entire body of the servants of Christ and God, who have been dispersed

through so many ages, and such a vast variety of circumstances, congregating, endowed with undecaying powers, in one place of mutual vision and recognition, for ceaseless rest, gratulation and praise—is it not almost overwhelming in the bare anticipation? There will be lawgivers; there will be prophets; there will be priests and seers; there will be apostles; there will be martyrs; there will be confessors; there will be reformers; there will be ministers and teachers; there will be missionaries. What a noble army! What a glorious company! Then each will tell of his trials, and each of his success; and

then shall be the commencement of a sweet interchange between those whose existence, directed by one master impulse, was devoted to the work of redemption, and the acquirement of immortality. There will be a magnificent triumphal celebration; they will sing their victories through the power of their Lord; they will utter high and rapturous rejoicing over the millions they have gathered for salvation; and heaven and earth, and angels and men, shall join them; and, with the mighty multitude which no man can number, they will pass to the mansion of eternity, and thus 'shout the harvest-home!'—J. PARSONS.

SECTION XXXII.—CHRIST CURES A NOBLEMAN'S SON.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW IV. 12; MARK I. 14, 15; JOHN IV. 43—54.

Now after that John was put in prison, when Jesus had heard that,—he departed, and came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye and believe the gospel. Now after two days he departed thence, (*that is, from Sychar,*) and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. Then, when he was come into Galilee, the Galilæans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: For they also went unto the feast. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: For he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders,¹ ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down² ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth.³ And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour⁴ when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew⁵ that *it was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: And himself believed, and his whole house.⁶ This *is* again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

1. *Except ye see signs and wonders, &c.*—Our Lord does not tell this man that he had no faith, but that he had not enough. If he had had none, he would not have come from Capernaum to Cana, to beg him to heal his son. If he had had enough, he would have been contented with recommending his son to our Lord, without entreating him to go to Capernaum to heal him; which intimates that he did not believe our Lord could do it at a distance. But the words are not addressed to the nobleman alone, but to all the Galilean Jews in general; for our Lord uses the plural number, which he never does when addressing an individual. These people differed widely from the people of Sychar; they had neither a love of the truth, nor simplicity of heart; and would not believe any thing from heaven, unless forced on their minds by the most striking miracles. They were favoured with the ministry of John Baptist; but, as that was not accompanied with miracles, it was not generally credited. They require the miracles of Christ, in order that they may credit the advent of the Messiah. There are many like these Galileans still in the world: They deny that God can have any influence among men; and as to the operations of the Holy Spirit, they, in the genuine Galilean spirit, boldly assert that they will not credit any man who professes to be made a partaker of them, unless he work a miracle in proof of his pretensions! These persons should know that the grace of working miracles was very different from that by which a man is saved; and that the former might exist, even in the most astonishing measure, where the latter did not.

2. *Sir, come down, &c.*—He did not think our Lord could cure him without being present, and seems here to feel himself hurt, because our Lord did not come at his first entreaty. It is difficult for a proud man, or a man in office, to humble himself, or to treat even God Almighty with proper respect. The spirit of this man seems not much unlike to that of Naaman the Syrian.

3. *Go thy way; thy son liveth*—Had our Lord gone with him, as he wished, his unbelief could not have been fully removed; as he would have still thought that our Lord's power could not reach from Cana to

Capernaum: In order to destroy his unbelief at once, and bring him into the fulness of the faith of his supreme power, he cures him, being apparently absent, by that energy through which he fills both the heavens and the earth. Here it may be observed, our blessed Lord did what this man requested him to do, but not in the way in which he wished it to be done. God will save all to the uttermost who call upon him, but not in the way in which they may desire. Eternal life is the free gift of God, and he has a right to give it as he pleases; and he always gives his gifts in that way in which his glory is best promoted, and our eternal interest secured.

4. *Then inquired he of them the hour*—The servants, overjoyed to find their master's son so suddenly restored, set off to meet him, that they might impart to him tidings which they knew would be so very agreeable; and he, intent on having his faith settled, began immediately to inquire what time it was when the fever left him, to see whether his cure was the effect of some natural cause, or whether it was done by the power of Christ.

5. *So the father knew*—He had the fullest proof that his son's cure was supernatural, and that it was wrought by the Lord Jesus.

6. *Himself believed, and his whole house*—He and his whole family became true converts to the doctrine of the manifested Messiah. The whole family, impressed with the great kindness of God in sending health to the child, were the more easily led to believe in the Lord Jesus. The sickness of the child became the mean of salvation to all the household. They, no doubt, thought at first that God was dealing hardly with them, when threatening to remove the child; but now they see that in very faithfulness God had afflicted them. Let us learn never to murmur against God, or think that he does not act kindly towards us. His wisdom cannot permit him to err; his goodness will not suffer him to do any thing to his creatures but what may be subservient to their best interests. By providential occurrences, apparently the most adverse, he may be securing our eternal salvation.

“With what affection and zeal does this tender parent apply to Christ, on the sick-

ness of his child! Let us not be less importunate, when soliciting spiritual blessings on behalf of our dear offspring; and so much the rather, as their lives are so precarious, and we know not how soon these lovely flowers may be cut down, and all farther petitions for them be for ever superseded."—DODDRIDGE.

SECTION XXXIII.—THE PREACHING OF CHRIST AT NAZARETH.

A. D. 27.

LUKE IV. 14—30.

AND Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit¹ into Galilee: And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues,² being glorified of all.⁵ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: And, as his custom was,⁴ he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord⁵ is upon me, because he hath anointed me⁶ to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words⁷ which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed,⁸ saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,⁹ and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them¹⁰ went his way.

1. *Returned in the power of the Spirit*—"In the mighty power of the Spirit." Having now conquered the grand adversary, he comes in the miracle-working energy of the Spirit, to show forth his power, Godhead, and love to the people, that they might believe and be saved. He who, through the grace of God, resists and overcomes temptation, is always bettered by it. This is one of the wonders of God's grace, that those very things which are designed for our utter ruin he makes the instruments of our greatest good. Thus satan is ever duped by his own proceedings, and caught in his own craft.

2. *And he taught in their synagogues*—We do not find that even the persecuting Jews ever hindered Christ or his disciples from preaching in their synagogues. Is it the same in every place, where even the Christian religion is established by law? Would Jesus, or his apostles, or their most scriptural representatives, be permitted to preach in one out of a thousand churches, in certain countries, unless they were strictly conformed to their external ecclesiastical customs? Nor even then, unless their doctrine were according to the taste of the managers and of the times.

3. *Glorified of all*—All felt the power of his preaching, and acknowledged the divinity of his mission. The scandal of the cross had not yet taken place.

4. *As his custom was*—Our Lord regularly attended the public worship of God in the synagogues; for there the scriptures were read. Other parts of the worship were very corrupt; but it was the best at that time to be found in the land. To worship God publicly is the duty of every man, and no man can be guiltless who neglects it. If a person cannot get such public worship as he likes, let him frequent such as he can get. Better to attend the most indifferent than to stay at home, especially on the Lord's day. The place and the time are set apart for the worship of the true God: If others do not conduct themselves well in it, that is not your fault, and need not be any hinderance to you. You come to worship God; do not forget your errand, and God will supply the lack in the service by the teachings of his Spirit.

5. *The Spirit of the Lord*—The pro-

claiming of liberty to the captives, and the acceptable year (or year of acceptance) of the Lord, is a manifest allusion to the proclaiming of the year of jubilee by sound of trumpet. This was a year of general release of debts and obligations, of bondmen and women, of lands and possessions, which had been sold from the families and tribes to which they belonged. Our Saviour, by applying this text to himself,—a text so manifestly relating to the institution above-mentioned,—plainly declares the typical design of that institution.

"How is the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity interwoven, even in those scriptures where one would least expect it! How clear a declaration of the great Three-One is there in those very words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me!'"—WESLEY.

6. *He hath anointed me*—I have been designed and set apart for this very purpose. My sole business among men is to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, &c. All the functions of this new Prophet are exercised on the hearts of men; and the grace, by which he works in the heart, is a grace of healing, deliverance, and illumination; which, by an admirable virtue, causes them to pass from sickness to health, from slavery to liberty, from darkness to light, and from the lowest degrees of misery to supreme, eternal happiness. To those who feel their spiritual poverty, whose hearts are broken through a sense of their sins, who see themselves tied and bound with the chains of many evil habits, who sit in the darkness of guilt and misery, without a friendly hand to lead them in the way in which they should go;—to these the gospel of the grace of Christ is a pleasing sound, because a present and full salvation is proclaimed by it; and the present is shown to be the acceptable year of the Lord; the year, the time, in which he saves to the uttermost all who come unto him in the name of his Son Jesus. Reader, what dost thou feel? Sin, wretchedness, misery of every description? Then come to Jesus: He will save thee: He came into the world for this very purpose. Cast thy soul upon him, and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life.

7. *At the gracious words*—It is very strange that none of the evangelists give us any account of this sermon. There was

certainly more of it than is related in the 21st verse: "To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears;" which seems to have been no more than the first sentence he spoke on the occasion. Had it been necessary for our salvation, it would have been recorded. It was a demonstration to those Jews, that Jesus, who preached to them, was the Person of whom the prophet there spoke. It was not designed for general edification. Let us make a good use of what we have got, and we shall not regret that this sermon is lost. The ear is never satisfied with hearing. We wish for another and another revelation, while sadly unacquainted with the nature and design of that which God's mercy has already given us.

8. *None of them was cleansed*—The meaning of these verses is, God dispenses his benefits when, where, and to whom he pleases. No person can complain of his conduct in these respects, because no person deserves any good from his hand. God never punishes any but those who deserve it; but he blesses incessantly those who deserve it not. The reason is evident: Justice depends on certain rules; but beneficence is free. Beneficence can bless both the good and the evil; justice can punish the latter only. Those who do not make this distinction must have a very confused notion of the conduct of Divine Providence among men.

9. *Were filled with wrath*—They seem to have drawn the following conclusion from what our Lord spoke: "The Gentiles are more precious in the sight of God than the Jews; and to them his miracles of mercy and kindness should be principally confined." This was pretty near the truth, as the event proved. Those who profit not by the light of God, while it is among them, shall have their candle extinguished. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles; not because the Gentiles were better than they were, but because, (1.) The Jews had forfeited their privileges; and, (2.) Because Christ saw that the Gentiles would bring forth the fruits of the kingdom.

10. *Passing through the midst of them*—Either he shut their eyes, so that they could not see him; or he so overawed them by his power as to leave them no strength

to perform their murderous purpose. The man Christ Jesus was immortal till his time came; and all his messengers are immortal till their work is done.

The following relation of a fact presents a scene something similar to what I suppose passed on this occasion: "A missionary,* who had been sent to a strange land to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God, and who had passed through many hardships, and was often in danger of losing his life, through the persecutions excited against him, came to a place where he had often before, at no small risk, preached Christ crucified. About fifty people, who had received good impressions from the word of God, assembled: He began his discourse; and, after he had preached about thirty minutes, an outrageous mob surrounded the house, armed with different instruments of death, and breathing the most sanguinary purposes. Some that were within shut to the door; and the missionary and his flock betook themselves to prayer. The mob assailed the house, and began to hurl stones against the walls, windows, and roof; and, in a short time, almost every tile was destroyed, and the roof nearly uncovered, and, before they quitted the premises, scarcely left one square inch of glass in the five windows by which the house was enlightened. While this was going forward, a person came with a pistol to the window opposite to the place where the preacher stood, (who was then exhorting his flock to be steady, to resign themselves to God, and trust in him,) presented it at him, and snapped it; but it only flashed in the pan! As the house was a wooden building, they began with crows and spades to undermine it, and take away its principal supports. The preacher then addressed his little flock to this effect: 'These outrageous people seek not you, but me; if I continue in the house, they will soon pull it down, and we shall be all buried in its ruins; I will, therefore, in the name of God, go out to them, and you will be safe.' He then went towards the door; the poor people got round him, and entreated him not to venture out, as he might expect to be instantly massacred; he went calmly forward, opened the door, at which a whole volley of stones and dirt was that instant

* Dr. Clarke himself, while in the island of Jersey, in 1788. S. D.

discharged; but he received no damage. The people were in crowds in all the space before the door, and filled the road for a considerable way, so that there was no room to pass or repass. As soon as the preacher made his appearance, the savages became instantly as silent and as still as night. He walked forward; and they divided to the right and to the left, leaving a passage of about four feet wide for himself, and a young man who followed him, to walk in. He passed on through the whole crowd, not a soul of whom either lifted a hand, or spoke one word, till he and his companion had gained the uttermost skirts of the mob!" The narrator, who was present on the occasion, goes on to say, "This was one of the most affecting spectacles I ever witnessed;

an infuriated mob, without any visible cause, (for the preacher spoke not one word,) became in a moment as calm as lambs! They seemed struck with amazement, bordering on stupefaction; they stared and stood speechless; and, after they had fallen back to right and left to leave him a free passage, they were as motionless as statues. They assembled with the full purpose to destroy the man who came to show them the way of salvation; 'but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.' Was not the God of missionaries in this work? The next Lord's day, the missionary went to the same place, and again proclaimed the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

SECTION XXXIV.—CALL OF PETER, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW IV. 13—22; MARK I. 16—20; LUKE IV. 31.

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he came into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came down to, and dwelt in, Capernaum, a city of Galilee, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness¹ saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death² light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, and to say, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent³ ye, and believe the gospel. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother,⁴ casting a net into the sea: For they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me,⁵ and I will make you to become fishers of men.⁶ And straightway they forsook their nets⁷ and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And straightway he called them: And they immediately left their father Zebedee in the ship⁸ with the hired servants, and went after him.

1. *The people which sat in darkness*— This is quoted from Isaiah ix. 2, where, instead of "sitting," the prophet used the word

"walked." The evangelist might on purpose change the term, to point out the increased misery of the state of these persons.

"Sitting in darkness" expresses a greater degree of intellectual blindness, than "walking in darkness" does. In the time of Christ's appearing, the people were in a much worse state than in the time of the prophet, which was nearly seven hundred years before; as, during all this period, they were growing more ignorant and sinful.

2. *The region and shadow of death*—These words are amazingly descriptive. A "region of death:" Death's country, where, in a peculiar manner, death lived, reigned, and triumphed, subjecting all the people to his sway. "Shadow of death:" It is not easy to enter fully into the ideal meaning of this term. As in the former clause death is personified, so here. A shadow is that darkness cast upon a place by a body raised between it and the light, or sun. Death is here represented as standing between the land above-mentioned, and the Light of Life, or Sun of Righteousness; in consequence of which, all the inhabitants were involved in a continual cloud of intellectual darkness, misery, and sin. The heavenly Sun was continually eclipsed to them, till this glorious time, when Jesus Christ, the true Light, shone forth in the beauty of holiness and truth. Christ began his ministry in Galilee, and frequented this uncultivated place more than he did Jerusalem and other parts of Judea. Here his preaching was peculiarly needful; and by this was the prophecy fulfilled.

3. *Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent*—Every preacher commissioned by God to proclaim salvation to a lost world, begins his work with preaching the doctrine of repentance. This was the case with all the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, all the Apostles, and all their genuine successors in the Christian ministry.

4. *Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother*—Why did not Jesus Christ call some of the eminent scribes or Pharisees to publish his gospel, and not poor, unlearned fishermen, without credit or authority? Because it was the kingdom of heaven they were to preach, and their teaching must come from above. Besides, the conversion of sinners, though it be effected instrumentally by the preaching of the gospel, yet the grand agent in it is the Spirit of God. As the instruments were comparatively mean, and the work which was accomplished

by them was grand and glorious, the excellency of the power at once appeared to be of God, and not of man; and thus the glory due alone to his name was secured, and the great Operator of all good had the deserved praise. Seminaries of learning, in the order of God's providence and grace, have great and important uses, and, in reference to such uses, they should be treated with great respect; but to make preachers of the gospel, is a matter to which they are utterly inadequate; it is a prerogative that God never did, and never will, delegate to man.

Where the seed of the kingdom of God is sowed, and a dispensation of the gospel is committed to a man, a good education may be of great and general use; but it no more follows, because a man has had a good education, that therefore he is qualified to preach the gospel, than it does that, because he has not had that, therefore he is unqualified; for there may be much ignorance of divine things where there is much human learning; and a man may be well taught in the things of God, and be able to teach others, who has not had the advantages of a liberal education.

Men-made ministers have almost ruined the heritage of God. To prevent this, our church requires that a man be inwardly moved to take upon himself this ministry, before he can be ordained to it. And he who cannot say that he trusts (has rational and scriptural conviction) that he is moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon himself this office, is an intruder into the heritage of God, and his ordination, *ipso facto*, vitiated and of none effect.

5. *And Jesus said, Come ye after me*—Receive my doctrines, imitate me in my conduct, in every respect be my disciples. We may observe, that most of the calls of God to man are expressed in a few solemn words, which alarm the conscience, and deeply impress the heart.

6. *I will make you fishers of men*—To follow Christ, and be admitted into a partnership of his ministry, is a great honour; but those only who are by himself fitted for it, God calls. Miserable are those who do not wait for this call, who presume to take the name of "fishers of men," and know not how to cast the net of the divine word, because not brought to an acquaintance

with the saving power of the God who bought them. Such persons, having only their secular interest in view, study not to catch men, but to catch money; and though, for charity's sake, it may be said of a pastor of this spirit, "He does not enter the sheepfold as a thief," yet he certainly lives as a hireling.

7. *They straightway forsook their nets*—A change, as far as it respected secular things, every way to their disadvantage. The proud and the profane may exult and say, "Such preachers as these cannot be much injured by their sacrifice of secular property; they have nothing but nets, &c., to leave." Let such carpers at the institution of Christ know, that he who has nothing but a net, and leaves that for the sake of doing good to the souls of men, leaves his all; besides, he lived comfortably by his net before, but, in becoming the servant of all for Christ's sake, he often exposes himself to the want of even a morsel of bread.

"Their minds had been prepared for the advent of the Messiah by the sermons of the Baptist, who, indeed, had pointed him out to Andrew and another disciple,—not improbably John himself,—for the Lamb of God, upon his appearance and call; there-

fore they readily received and obeyed him; laying the foundation of the Christian building in the renunciation of the world."—BISHOP HORNE.

8. *Left, their father in the ship*—To be obedient to, provide for, and comfort our parents, is the highest duty we owe or can discharge, except that to God. But when God calls to the work of the ministry, father, and mother, and all must be left. Were we necessary to their comfort and support before? Then God, if he calls us into another work or state, will take care to supply to them our lack of service, some other way; and if this be not done, it is a proof we have mistaken our call. Again: Were our parents necessary to us, and, in leaving them for the sake of the gospel, or in obedience to a divine command, do we deprive ourselves of the comforts of life? No matter. We should prefer the honour of serving the Most High, even in poverty and humility, to all the comforts of a father's house. But what an honour was the vocation of James and John to old Zebedee their father! His sons are called to be heralds of the God of heaven. Allowing him to have been a pious man, this must have given him unutterable delight.

SECTION XXXV.—THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

A. D. 27.

LUKE V. 1—11.

AND it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him¹ to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: But the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master,² we have toiled all the night,³ and have taken nothing: Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.⁴ And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: And their net brake. And they beckoned unto *their* partners,⁵ which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled

both the ships,⁶ so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man,⁷ O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken : And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.⁸ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.⁹

1. *The people pressed upon him*—There was a glorious prospect of a plentiful harvest ; but how few of these blades came to full corn in the ear ! To hear with diligence and affection, is well ; but a preacher of the gospel may expect that, out of crowds of hearers, only a few, comparatively, will fully receive the truth, and hold out to the end.

2. *Simon answering said unto him, Master*—To hear attentively, and obey cheerfully, are duties we owe, not only to the sovereign Master of the world, but also to ourselves. No man ever took Jesus profitably for his Teacher, who did not at the same time receive him as his Lord.

3. *We have toiled all the night*—They had cast the net several times in the course of the night, and drew it to shore without success, and were now greatly disheartened. I have seen several laborious draughts of this kind made without fruit. All labour must be fruitless where the blessing of God is not ; but especially that of the ministry. It is the presence and influence of Christ, in a congregation, that cause souls to be gathered unto himself : Without these, whatever the preacher's eloquence or abilities may be, all will be night, and fruitless labour.

4. *At thy word I will let down the net*—He who assumes the character of a "fisher of men," under any authority that does not proceed from Christ, is sure to catch nothing ; but he who labours by the order and under the direction of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, cannot labour in vain.

5. *They beckoned unto their partners*—Had not these been called in to assist, the net must have been broken, and all the fish lost. What a pity there should be such envious separation among the different sects that profess to believe in Christ

Jesus ! Did they help each other in the spirit of Christian fellowship, more souls would be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Some will rather leave souls to perish than admit of partners in the sacred work. It is an intolerable pride, to think nothing well done but what we do ourselves ; and a diabolic envy, to be afraid lest others should be more successful than we are.

"There sometimes appears to be a necessary connexion between our blessings and our afflictions ; so that if we would enjoy the one, we must consent to suffer the other. The net brake, because it was so very full of fishes. The boat began to sink, because it was overloaded. On the same principle it often happens that he that increaseth riches increaseth sorrow. Every earthly advantage is a root of bitterness, and is generally fruitful in sorrow and pain. The afflictions of a good man only tend to heighten his gratitude, by more abundant displays of the divine faithfulness and love. It was wonderful that the net should be suffered to break ; but it was more wonderful that, after this accident, the fishes were not lost. 'It was wonderful that the boat should be suffered to begin to sink ; but it was more wonderful that, in such a state, they should all come safe to land. God often reduces his people to the last extremities, and then shows them his salvation.'—S. JACKSON.

6. *They filled both the ships*—Both the boats had as many as they could carry, and were so heavily laden that they were ready to sink. As one justly observes, "There are fish plenty to be taken, were there skilful hands to take, and vessels to contain them. Many are disputing about the size, capacity, and goodness of their nets and their vessels, while the fish are permitted to make their escape." Did the

faithful fishers in both the vessels in these lands (the established Church, and the various branches of the dissenting interest) join heartily together, the nations might be converted to God; but, while the ridiculous disputes for and against particular forms last, there can be no unity. Were men as zealous to catch souls, as they are to support their particular creeds and forms of worship, the state of Christianity would be more flourishing than it is at present. But the wall of separation is continually strengthened, each party fortifying it on his own side.

7. *Depart from me; for I am a sinful man*—"Go out from me;" that is, from my boat. Peter was fully convinced that this draught of fish was a miraculous one; and that God himself had particularly interfered in this matter, whose presence and power he revered in the person of Jesus. But as he felt himself a sinner, he was afraid the divine purity of Christ could not possibly endure him; therefore he wished for a separation from that power, which he was afraid might break forth and consume him. It seems to have been a received maxim among the Jews, that whoever had seen a particular manifestation of God should speedily die. Hence Jacob seemed astonished that his life should have been preserved, when he had seen God face to face. So the nobles of Israel saw God, and yet did eat and drink; for on them he had laid not his hand; that is, to destroy them, though it appears to have been expected by them, in consequence of this discovery which he made of himself. This supposition of the Jews seems to have

been founded on the authority of God himself: "There shall no man see my face and live." So Moses: "Who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" So Gideon expected to be immediately slain, because he had seen an angel of the Lord, and a miracle performed by him. So likewise Manoah and his wife: "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." These different passages sufficiently show in what sense these words of Peter are to be understood.

8. *Thou shalt catch men*—"Thou shalt catch men alive." Fear not; these discoveries of God tend to life, not to death; and ye shall become the instruments of life and salvation to a lost world. These fish are taken to be killed and fed on; but those who are converted under your ministry shall be preserved unto eternal life.

9. *They forsook all and followed him*—God expects this from every person, and especially from those in whose hearts, or in whose behalf, he has wrought a miracle of grace or of providence. Jesus intended to call Peter, James, and John, to become his disciples; and, that they might see the propriety and importance of the call, he,

(1.) Teaches in their presence, that they may know his doctrine.

(2.) He works a miracle before their eyes, that they might see and be convinced of his power.

(3.) He calls them to go forth with this doctrine, and through this power, that they might teach the ignorant, and be successful in their work.

SECTION XXXVI.—THE DEMONIAK HEALED; PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW CURED.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW VIII. 14, 15; MARK I. 21—31; LUKE IV. 33—39.

AND they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And in their synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil,¹ and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?² I know

thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him,³ saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, *and* torn him,⁴ he cried with a loud voice, *and* came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine *is* this? for with authority and power commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him, and come out. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee, into every place of the country round about. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon⁵ and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother⁶ lay sick of a great fever; and anon they tell him of her, and besought him for her. And he came, and stood over her, and took her by the hand,⁷ and lifted her up; and rebuked the fever: And immediately the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them.⁸

1. *A spirit of an unclean devil*—It seems the man had lucid intervals; else he could not have been admitted into the synagogue. "Unclean" or "impure spirit," a common epithet for those fallen spirits; but here it may mean, one who filled the heart of him he possessed with lascivious thoughts, images, desires, and propensities. By giving way to the first attacks of such a spirit, he may soon get in, and take full possession of the whole soul.

2. *Art thou come to destroy us?*—We may suppose this spirit to have felt and spoken thus: "Is this the time of which it hath been predicted, that in it the Messiah should destroy all that power which we have usurped and exercised over the bodies and souls of men? Alas! it is so: I now plainly see 'who thou art; the Holy One of God,' who art come to destroy unholiness, in which we have our residence, and through which we have our reign, in the souls of men." An unholy spirit is the only place where satan can have his full operation, and show forth the plenitude of his destroying power.

3. *And Jesus rebuked him*—A spirit of this cast will only yield to the sovereign power of the Son of God. All watchings, fastings, and mortifications, considered in themselves, will do little or no good. Uncleanliness, of every description, will only yield to the rebuke of God.

4. *And when the unclean spirit had torn him*—Never was there a person possessed by an unclean spirit who did not suffer a convulsion, perhaps a total ruin, of nature by it. Sins of uncleanness, as the apostle intimates, are against the body; they sap the foundation of life, so that there are very few of this class, whether male or female, that live out half their days; they generally die martyrs to their lusts. When the propensities of the flesh are most violent in a person who is determined to serve God, it is often a proof that these are the last efforts of the impure spirit, who has great rage, because he knows his time is but short.

"The universal opinion in the east is, that devils have the power to enter into and take possession of men, in the same sense as we understand it to have been the case, as described by the sacred writers."—J. ROBERTS.

5. *House of Simon*—That Peter lived at Capernaum, and that Christ lodged with him, is fully evident from this verse, compared with Matt. xvii. 24.

6. *Simon's wife's mother*—Learn hence, that marriage is no hinderance to virtue, since the chief of the apostles had his wife. Marriage is one of the first of divine institutions, and is a positive command of God. He says, the state of celibacy is not good: Those who pretend to say that the single

state is more holy than the other, slander their Maker, and say in effect, "We are too holy to keep the commandments of God." As soon as Peter began to follow Christ, his family began to benefit by it. It is always profitable to contract an acquaintance with good men. One person full of faith and prayer may be the means of drawing down innumerable blessings on his family and acquaintance. Every person who knows the virtue and authority of Christ should earnestly seek his grace in behalf of all the spiritually diseased in his household; nor can he seek the aid of Christ in vain.

7. *Took her by the hand*—Can any thing on this side the unlimited power of God effect such a cure with only a touch? If the scriptures had not spoken of the divinity of Christ, these proofs of his power must have demonstrated it to the common sense

of every man whose creed had not previously blinded him.

"Sometimes our Lord healed by a word, sometimes by a touch, and in the case of the leper by both. Perhaps in this case both were used; for St. Luke says, 'He rebuked the fever,' as he rebuked the winds and waves on another occasion; and his assuming this tone of authority was an illustration of the words of the centurion. All things, the elements of nature, the restless seas, the boisterous winds, the fiercest diseases, and, let us not forget, the infection of sin itself in the heart of man, acknowledge his authority, and yield to his rebuke."—R. WATSON.

8. *Ministered unto them*—Serving Christ in his ordinances, and in his members, is the best proof we can give to others of our being soundly restored to spiritual health.

SECTION XXXVII.—CHRIST PERFORMS SEVERAL MIRACULOUS CURES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW VIII. 16, 17; IV. 23—25; MARK I. 32—39;
LUKE IV. 40, 44.

AND at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and many that were possessed with devils: All they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him: And he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and laid his hands on every one of them, and healed all that were sick.¹ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities,² and bare our sicknesses. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking *them*, suffered them not to speak: For they knew that he was Christ. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, when it was day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee. And the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: For therefore am I sent, therefore came I forth. And

Jesus went about all Galilee, and cast out devils, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,³ and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic,⁴ and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan.

1. *And healed all that were sick*—Not a soul did the Lord Jesus ever reject, who came to him soliciting his aid. Need any sinner despair who comes to him, conscious of his spiritual malady, to be healed by his merciful hand?

2. *Himself took our infirmities*—Christ fulfils the prophecies in all respects, and is himself the completion and truth of them, as being the Lamb and Victim of God, which bears and takes away the sin of the world. The text in Isaiah refers properly to the taking away of sin; and this in the evangelist, to the removal of corporeal afflictions: But, as the diseases of the body are the emblems of the sin of the soul, Matthew, referring to the prediction of the prophet, considered the miraculous healing of the body as an emblem of the soul's salvation by Christ Jesus.

3. *Preaching the gospel of the kingdom*—Or, "proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom." Behold here the perfect pattern of an evangelical preacher: (1.) He goes about seeking sinners on every side, that he may show them the way to heaven. (2.) He proclaims the glad tidings of the kingdom, with a freedom worthy of the King whom he serves. (3.) He makes his reputation and the confidence of the people subservient, not to his own interest, but to the salvation of souls. (4.) To his preaching he joins, as far as he has ability, all works of mercy, and temporal assistance to the bodies of men. (5.) He takes care to inform men that diseases, and all kinds of temporal evils, are the effects of sin, and that their hatred to iniquity should increase in proportion to the evils they endure through it. (6.) And that nothing but the power of God can save them from sin and

its consequences. It seems strange to find men at this distance of time questioning the truth of that which neither scribes nor Pharisees then doubted; nor did they ever object against the pretensions of Christ and his apostles to cast them out. And, if the whole business of demonism had been only a vulgar error, (as wise men now tell us,) what a fine opportunity had the wise men then to unmask the whole matter, and thus pour contempt on the pretensions of our blessed Lord and his followers, who held it to be one proof of their divine mission, that demons were subject to them!

4. *Lunatic*—Persons afflicted with epileptic or other disorders, which are always known to have a singular increase at the change and full of the moon. This undoubtedly proceeds from the superadded attractive influence of the sun and moon upon the earth's atmosphere, as, in the periods mentioned above, these two luminaries are both in conjunction; and their united attractive power, being exerted on the earth at the same time, not only causes the flux and reflux of the ocean, but occasions a variety of important changes in the bodies of infirm persons, of animals in general, but more particularly in those who are more sensible of these variations. And is this any wonder, when it is well known, that a very slight alteration in the atmosphere causes the most uncomfortable sensations to a number of invalids? But sometimes even these diseases were caused by demons.

"When I find mention made of the number of demons in particular possessions, their actions so expressly distinguished from those of the man possessed, conversations held by the former in regard to the

disposal of them after their expulsion, and accounts given how they were actually disposed of; when I find desires and passions ascribed peculiarly to them, and similitudes taken from the conduct which they usually observe, it is impossible for me to deny their existence."—CAMPBELL.

"Through the atonement of Christ all our blessings come; and as all our sufferings are the consequences of sin, none of them could have been removed, had not propitiation been made for sin, and the right to deliver us from all its consequences been acquired by our Redeemer. Whatever blessings, therefore, our Lord bestowed during his ministry on earth, were given with reference to that 'bearing' of the penalty of sin which he was ultimately to sustain, and by virtue of which he was to take it away, in all its consequences, as to all those who should come to him in faith. And as by virtue of that anticipated atonement he, whilst on earth, 'forgave sins,' so by virtue of the same anticipated atonement he healed the diseases of the body, all which are the fruits of sin. Whenever, therefore, he did either of these, removing

either sin itself from the consciences of men, or any of its consequences from their persons, in virtue of his being the appointed sin-offering, those words of the prophet, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' were directly fulfilled: Since these were the proofs and effects of his substitution in our place as the accepted Sacrifice; they were all, in a word, demonstrations of the efficacy of his atonement. Nor are we to suppose that Christ 'bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows' by actual vicarious suffering only when upon the cross. He bore them, as the penalty of sin, in his agony as well as at his crucifixion; and often previously, whenever he 'groaned in spirit,' and was 'troubled.' All his humiliations, and all his mental distresses, in coming into a world so full of sin and misery, formed a part of the grand sum of vicarious suffering by which 'the sin of the world' was to be taken away; and upon his spirit the sight of that accumulated misery, so often presented by the multitudes of sick and possessed and tormented persons, produced a sorrowful effect."—R. WATSON.

SECTION XXXVIII.—CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE BEATITUDES.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 1—12.

AND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: And when he was set, his disciples¹ came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: ² For their's is the kingdom of heaven.³ Blessed *are* they that mourn: ⁴ For they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek: ⁵ For they shall inherit the earth.⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst ⁷ after righteousness: For they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful: ⁸ For they shall obtain mercy.⁹ Blessed *are* the pure in heart: ¹⁰ For they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers: ¹¹ For they shall be called the children of God. Blessed *are* they which are persecuted ¹² for righteousness' sake: For their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute ¹³ *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your reward in heaven: For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

1. *His disciples*—The word signifies literally a scholar. Those who originally followed Christ considered him in the light of a Divine Teacher; and conscious of their ignorance, and the importance of his teaching, they put themselves under his tuition, that they might be instructed in heavenly things. Having been taught the mysteries of the kingdom of God, they became closely attached to their Divine Master, imitating his life and manners; and recommending his salvation to all the circle of their acquaintance. This is still the characteristic of a genuine disciple of Christ.

2. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*—The person whom Christ terms happy is one who is not under the influence of fate or chance, but is governed by an all-wise providence, having every step directed to the attainment of immortal glory, being transformed by the power into the likeness of the ever-blessed God. Though some of the persons, whose states are mentioned in these verses, cannot be said to be as yet blessed or happy, in being made partakers of the divine nature; yet they are termed happy by our Lord, because they are on the straight way to this blessedness. "Poor in spirit:" One who is deeply sensible of his spiritual poverty and wretchedness. Being destitute of the true riches, he is tremblingly alive to the necessities of his soul, shrinking with fear lest he should perish without the salvation of God. Such, Christ pronounces happy, because there is but a step between them and that kingdom which is here promised.

3. *Kingdom of heaven*—A participation of all the blessings of the new covenant here, and the blessings of glory above. "Blessed are the poor!" this is God's word: But who believes it? Do we not say, "Yea, rather, blessed is the rich?"

4. *Blessed are they that mourn*—That is, those who, feeling their spiritual poverty, mourn after God, lamenting the iniquity that separated them from the Fountain of blessedness. Every one flies from sorrow, and seeks after joy, and yet true joy must necessarily be the fruit of sorrow. The whole need not, do not feel the need of, the physician, but they that are sick do; that is, they who are sensible of their disease. Only such persons as are deeply convinced

of the sinfulness of sin feel the plague of their own heart, and turn with disgust from all worldly consolations, because of their insufficiency to render them happy, have God's promise of solid comfort. "They shall be comforted," says Christ. He will call them to himself, and speak the words of pardon, peace, and life eternal, to their hearts.

5. *Blessed are the meek*—Those who are of a quiet, gentle spirit, in opposition to the proud and supercilious scribes and Pharisees, and their disciples. We have a compound word in English, which once fully expressed the meaning of the original, namely, "gentleman;" but it has now almost wholly lost its original signification. Our word "meek" comes from the old Anglo-Saxon *mecca* or *mecea*, a "companion" or "equal," because he who is of a meek or gentle spirit is ever ready to associate with the meanest of those who fear God, feeling himself superior to none; and well knowing that he has nothing of spiritual or temporal good but what he has received from the mere bounty of God, having never deserved any favour from his hand.

6. *For they shall inherit the earth*—Under this expression, which was commonly used by the prophets to signify the "land of Canaan," in which all temporal good abounded, Jesus Christ points out that abundance of spiritual good, which was provided for men in the gospel. Besides, Canaan was a type of the kingdom of God; and who is so likely to inherit glory as the man in whom the meekness and gentleness of Jesus dwell?

7. *They which do hunger and thirst*—As the body has its natural appetites of hunger and thirst for the food and drink suited to its nourishment, so has the soul. No being is indestructible or unfailing in its nature but God; no being is independent but him; as the body depends for its nourishment, health, and strength upon the earth, so does the soul upon heaven. Heavenly things cannot support the body; they are not suited to its nature; earthly things cannot support the soul, for the same reason. When the uneasy sensation termed "hunger" takes place in the stomach, we know we must get food, or perish. When the soul is awakened to a sense of its wants, and begins to hunger and thirst after right-

teousness or holiness, which is its proper food, we know that it must be purified by the Holy Spirit, and be made a partaker of that living bread, John vi. 48, or perish everlastingly. Now, as God never inspires a prayer but with the design to answer it, he who hungers and thirsts after the full salvation of God may depend on being speedily and effectually blessed or satisfied.

8. *The merciful*—The word "mercy," among the Jews, signified two things: The pardon of injuries and almsgiving. Our Lord undoubtedly takes it in its fullest latitude here. Mercy supposes two things: (1.) A distressed object; and, (2.) A disposition of the heart, through which it is affected at the sight of such an object. This virtue, therefore, is no other than a lively emotion of the heart, which is excited by the discovery of any creature's misery; and such an emotion as manifests itself outwardly, by effects suited to its nature.

9. *They shall obtain mercy*—Mercy is not purchased but at the price of mercy itself; and even this price is a gift of the mercy of God. What mercy can those vindictive persons expect, who forgive nothing, and are always ready to improve every advantage they have of avenging themselves? Whatever mercy a man shows to another, God will take care to show the same to him.

10. *Pure in heart*—In opposition to the Pharisees, who affected outward purity, while their hearts were full of corruption and defilement. A principal part of the Jewish religion consisted in outward washings and cleansings: On this ground they expected to see God, to enjoy eternal glory; but Christ here shows that a purification of the heart, from all vile affections and desires, is essentially requisite in order to enter into the kingdom of God. He whose soul is not delivered from all sin, through the blood of the covenant, can have no scriptural hope of ever being with God.

"The Jews considered the empyreal heaven as the archetype of the temple of Jerusalem. In the latter, they enjoyed the symbols of God's presence, who spoke to them by his ministers; whereas, in the former, the blessed inhabitants have an immediate sense of the divine presence, and God speaks to them face to face. Our Lord, preserving the analogy between the

two dispensations, intimates that cleanness will be as necessary in order to procure admission into the celestial temple, as into the terrestrial. But as the privilege is inconceivably higher, the qualification is more important. The cleanness is not ceremonial, but moral; not of the outward man, but of the inward."—CAMPBELL.

11. *The peace-makers*—A peace-maker is a man who, being endowed with a generous public spirit, labours for the public good, and feels his own interest promoted in promoting that of others; therefore, instead of fanning the fire of strife, he uses his influence and wisdom to reconcile the contending parties, adjust their differences, and restore them to a state of unity. As all men are represented to be in a state of hostility to God and each other, the gospel is called "the gospel of peace," because it tends to reconcile men to God and to each other. Hence our Lord here terms peace-makers, "the children of God;" for as he is the Father of peace, those who promote it are reputed his children. But whose children are they who foment divisions in the church, the state, or among families? Surely they are not of that God, who is the Father of peace, and Lover of concord; of that Christ, who is the Sacrifice and Mediator of it; of that Spirit, who is the nourisher and bond of peace; nor of that church of the Most High, which is the kingdom and family of peace.

12. *They which are persecuted*—"They are happy who suffer," seems a strange saying; and that the righteous should suffer, merely because they are such, seems as strange. But such is the enmity of the human heart to every thing of God and goodness, that all those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution in one form or other. As the religion of Christ gives no quarter to vice, so the vicious will give no quarter to this religion, or to its professors.

13. *When men shall revile you, and persecute*—The persecution mentioned in the preceding verse comprehends all outward acts of violence—all that the hand can do. This comprehends all calumny, slander, &c., all that the tongue can effect.

The followers of Christ are encouraged to suffer joyfully on two considerations: (1.) They are thereby conformed to the

prophets who went before. (2.) Their reward in heaven is a great one. God gives the grace to suffer, and then crowns that grace with glory; hence it is plain, the reward is not of debt, but of grace.

“The chief object of the Pagans was immortal fame; for this their poets sang, their heroes fought, and their patriots died; and this was hung out by their philosophers and legislators, as the great incite-

ment to all noble and virtuous deeds. But what says the Christian Legislator to his disciples on this subject? ‘Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your reward in heaven.’ So widely different is the genius of Pagan and Christian morality!”—SOAME JENYNS.

SECTION XXXIX.—JESUS CHRIST DESCRIBES HIS DISCIPLES, AND FULFILS THE LAW.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 13—20.

YE are the salt of the earth: ¹ But if the salt have lost his savour, ² wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. ³ A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine ⁴ before men, that they may see your good works, ⁵ and glorify your Father ⁶ which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, ⁷ or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ⁸ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, ⁹ and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: But whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed ¹⁰ *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1. *Ye are the salt of the earth*—Our Lord shows here what the preachers of the gospel, and what all who profess to follow him, should be: The salt of the earth, to preserve the world from putrefaction and destruction.

2. *But if the salt have lost his savour*—That this is possible in the land of Judea, we have proof from Mr. Maundrell, who, describing the Valley of Salt, speaks thus: “Along, on one side of the valley, towards Gibul, there is a small precipice, about two men’s lengths, occasioned by the continual

taking away of the salt; and, in this, you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which, that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour; the inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof.” A preacher, or private Christian, who has lost the life of Christ, and the witness of his Spirit, out of his soul, may be likened to this salt. He may have the sparks and glittering particles of true wisdom, but with-

out its unction or comfort. Only that which is connected with the Rock, the soul that is in union with Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, can preserve its savour, and be instrumental of good to others.

3. *Ye are the light of the world*—That is, the instruments which God chooses to make use of, to illuminate the minds of men; as he uses the sun—to which, probably, he pointed—to enlighten the world.

4. *Let your light so shine*—As the sun is lighted up in the firmament of heaven, to diffuse its light and heat freely to every inhabitant of the earth; and as the lamp is not set under the bushel, but placed upon the lamp-stand, that it may give light to all in the house; thus let every follower of Christ, and especially every preacher of the gospel, diffuse the light of heavenly knowledge, and the warmth of divine love, through the whole circle of their acquaintance.

5. *That they may see your good works*—It is not sufficient to have light; we must walk in the light, and by the light; our whole conduct should be a perpetual comment on the doctrine we have received, and a constant exemplification of its power and truth.

6. *And glorify your Father*—Real Christians are the children of God; they are partakers of his holy and happy nature; they should ever be concerned for their Father's honour, and endeavour so to recommend him, and his salvation, that others may be prevailed on to come to the light, and walk in it. Then God is said to be glorified, when the glorious power of his grace is manifested in the salvation of men.

7. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law*—"Do not imagine that I am come to violate the law." I am not come to make the law of none effect; to dissolve the connexion which subsists between its several parts, or the obligation men are under to have their lives regulated by its moral precepts; nor am I come to dissolve the connecting reference it has to the good things promised: But I am come to complete, to perfect its connexion and reference; to accomplish every thing shadowed forth in the Mosaic ritual; to fill up its great design; and to give grace to all my followers; to fill up, or complete, every

moral duty. In a word, Christ completed the law: (1.) In itself. It was only the shadow, the typical representation, of good things to come; and he added to it that which was necessary to make it perfect,—his own sacrifice; without which, it could neither satisfy God, nor sanctify men. (2.) He completed it in himself; by submitting to its types with an exact obedience, and verifying them by his death upon the cross. (3.) He completes this law, and the sayings of his prophets, in his members; by giving them grace to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves; for this is all the law and the prophets.

8. *Till all be fulfilled*—Or, "accomplished." Though all earth and hell should join together to hinder the accomplishment of the great designs of the Most High, yet it shall all be in vain; even the sense of a single letter shall not be lost. The words of God, which point out his designs, are as unchangeable as his nature itself. Every sinner, who perseveres in his iniquity, shall surely be punished with separation from God, and the glory of his power; and every soul that turns to God, through Christ, shall as surely be saved, as that Jesus himself hath died.

9. *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments*—The Pharisees were remarkable for making a distinction between weightier and lighter matters in the law, and between what has been called, in a corrupt part of the Christian church, mortal and venial sins. "Whosoever shall break." What an awful consideration is this! He who, by his mode of acting, speaking, or explaining the words of God, sets the holy precept aside, or explains away its force and meaning, "shall be called least." Shall have no place in the kingdom of Christ here, nor in the kingdom of glory above.

10. *Except your righteousness shall exceed*—"Unless your righteousness abound more;" unless it take in, not only the letter, but the spirit and design, of the moral and ritual precept; the one directing you how to walk so as to please God; the other pointing out Christ, the great Atone-ment, through and by which a sinner is enabled to do so. "More than that of the scribes and Pharisees:" Who only attended

to the letter of the law, and had, indeed, made even that of no effect by their tradi- tions; "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

SECTION XL.—MURDER, ANGER, INJURIOUS SPEAKING.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 21—26.

YE have heard that it was said by them of old time,¹ Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause² shall be in danger of the judgment: And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift³ to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar,⁴ and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.⁵ Agree with thine adversary quickly,⁶ while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.⁷

1. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*—Murder, from the beginning, has been punished with death; and it is, probably, the only crime that should be punished with death. There is much reason to doubt whether the punishment of death, inflicted for any other crime, is not in itself murder, whatever the authority may be that has instituted it. God, and the greatest legislators that have ever been in the universe, are of the same opinion.

2. *Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause*—What our Lord seems here to prohibit, is not merely that miserable facility which some have of being angry at every trifle, continually taking offence against their best friends; but that anger which leads a man to commit outrages against another, thereby subjecting himself to that punishment which was to be inflicted on those who brake the peace.

Now, if the above offences were to be severely punished, which did not immediately affect the life of another, how much sorer must the punishment of murder be!

And as there could not be a greater punishment inflicted than death, in the above terrific forms, and this was to be inflicted for minor crimes; then the punishment of murder must not only have death here, but a hell of fire in the eternal world, attached to it. It seems that these different degrees of guilt, and the punishment attached to each, had not been properly distinguished among the Jews. Our Lord here calls their attention back to them, and gives them to understand, that, in the coming world, there are different degrees of punishment prepared for different degrees of vice; and that not only the outward act of iniquity should be judged and punished by the Lord, but that injurious words, and evil passions, should all meet their just recompence and reward. Murder is the most punishable of all crimes, according to the written law, in respect both of our neighbours and civil society. But He who sees the heart, and judges it by the eternal law, punishes as much a word, or a desire, if the hatred whence they proceed be complete and perfected.

3. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift—* Evil must be nipped in the bud. An unkind thought of another may be the foundation of that which leads to actual murder. A Christian, properly speaking, cannot be an enemy to any man; nor is he to consider any man his enemy, without the fullest evidence: For surmises to the prejudice of another can never rest in the bosom of him who has the love of God in his heart, for to him all men are brethren. He sees all men as children of God, and members of Christ, or at least capable of becoming such. If a tender forgiving spirit was required, even in a Jew, when he approached God's altar with a bullock or a lamb, how much more necessary is this in a man who professes to be a follower of the Lamb of God; especially when he receives the symbols of that Sacrifice which was offered for the life of the world, in what is commonly called the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

4. *Leave there thy gift before the altar—* This is as much as to say, "Do not attempt to bring any offering to God whilst thou art in a spirit of enmity against any person; or hast any difference with thy neighbour, which thou hast not used thy diligence to get adjusted." It is our duty and interest, both to bring our gift, and offer it too; but God will not accept of any act of religious worship from us, while any enmity subsists in our hearts towards any soul of man; or while any subsists in our neighbour's heart towards us, which we have not used the proper means to remove. A religion, the very essence of which is love, cannot suffer at its altars a heart that is revengeful and uncharitable, or which does not use its utmost endeavours to revive love in the heart of another.

5. *Then come and offer thy gift—* "Then;" when either thy brother is reconciled to thee, or thou hast done all in thy power to effect this reconciliation. My own obstinacy and uncharitableness must render me utterly unfit to receive any good from God's hands, or to worship him in an acceptable manner; but the wickedness of another can be no hinderance to me, when I have endeavoured earnestly to get it removed, though without effect.

6. *Agree with thine adversary quickly*—Our Lord enforces the exhortation given in the preceding verses, from the consideration of what was deemed prudent in ordinary law-suits. In such cases, men should make up matters with the utmost speed; as running through the whole course of a law-suit must not only be vexatious, but be attended with great expense; and in the end, though the loser may be ruined, yet the gainer has nothing. A good use of this very prudential advice of our Lord is this: "Thou art a sinner; God hath a controversy with thee. There is but a step between thee and death. Now is the accepted time. Thou art invited to return to God by Christ Jesus. Come immediately at his call, and he will save thy soul. Delay not! Eternity is at hand; and, if thou die in thy sins, where God is thou shalt never come."

7. *The uttermost farthing—*If the matter issue in law, strict justice will be done, and your creditor be allowed the fulness of his just claim; but if, while you are on the way, going to the magistrate, you come to a friendly agreement with him, he will relax in his claims, take a part for the whole, and the composition be, in the end, both to his and your profit.

SECTION XLI.—IMPURITY, DIVORCE, SWEARING.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 27—37.

YE have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her¹ hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.² And if thy right eye offend thee,³ pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: For it is profitable for thee that one of thy

members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off,⁴ and cast *it* from thee: For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members⁵ should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication,⁶ causeth her to commit adultery: And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself,⁷ but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all;⁸ neither by heaven;⁹ for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: Neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,¹⁰ because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay:¹¹ For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

1. *Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her*—In all these cases, our blessed Lord points out the spirituality of the law; which was a matter to which the Jews paid very little attention. Indeed, it is the property of a Pharisee to abstain only from the outward crime. Men are very often less inquisitive to know how far the will of God extends, that they may please him in performing it, than they are to know how far they may satisfy their lusts without destroying their bodies and souls utterly, by an open violation of his law.

2. *Hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*—It is the earnest wish or desire of the soul, which, in a variety of cases, constitutes the good or evil of an act. If a man earnestly wish to commit an evil, but cannot, because God puts time, place, and opportunity out of his power, he is fully chargeable with the iniquity of the act, by that God who searches and judges the heart. So, if a man earnestly wish to do some kindness, which it is out of his power to perform, the act is considered as his; because God, in this case, as in that above, takes the will for the deed. If voluntary and deliberate looks and desires make adulterers and adulteresses, how many persons are there whose whole life is one continued crime! whose

"eyes being full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin." Many would abhor to commit one external act before the eyes of men, in a temple of stone; and yet they are not afraid to commit a multitude of such acts in the temple of their hearts, and in the sight of God!

3. *And if thy right eye offend thee*—The right eye and the right hand are used here to point out those sins which appear most pleasing and profitable to us; from which we must be separated, if we desire ever to see the kingdom of God.

4. *Pluck it out, cut it off*—We must shut our senses against dangerous objects, to avoid the occasions of sin, and deprive ourselves of all that is most dear and profitable unto us, in order to save our souls, when we find that these dear and profitable things, however innocent in themselves, cause us to sin against God.

5. *It is profitable for thee that one of thy members*—Men often part with some members of the body, at the discretion of a surgeon, that they may preserve the trunk, and die a little later; and yet they will not deprive themselves of a look, a touch, a small pleasure, which endanger the eternal death of the soul. It is not enough to shut the eye, or stop the hand; the one must be plucked out, and the other cut off. Neither is this enough: We must cast them

both from us. Not one moment's truce with an evil passion, or a sinful appetite. If you indulge them, they will gain strength, and you shall be ruined.

6. *Saving for the cause of fornication*—"On account of whoredom." As fornication signifies no more than the unlawful connexion of unmarried persons, it cannot be used here with propriety, when speaking of those who are married. I have therefore translated it "on account of whoredom." It does not appear that there is any other case in which Jesus Christ admits of divorce. A real Christian ought rather to beg of God the grace to bear patiently and quietly the imperfections of his wife, than to think of the means of being parted from her. "But divorce was allowed by Moses." Yes, for the hardness of their hearts it was permitted: But what was permitted to an uncircumcised heart among the Jews, should not serve for a rule to a heart in which the love of God has been shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. Those who form a matrimonial connexion in the fear and love of God, and under his direction, will never need a divorce. But those who marry as passion or money lead the way, may be justly considered adulterers and adulteresses as long as they live.

7. *Thou shalt not forswear thyself*—They dishonour the great God, and break this commandment, who use frequent oaths and imprecations, even in reference to things that are true; and those who make vows and promises, which they either cannot perform, or do not design to fulfil, are not less criminal. Swearing in civil matters is become so frequent, that the dread and obligation of an oath are utterly lost in it. In certain places, where oaths are frequently administered, people have been known to kiss their thumb or pen, instead of the book, thinking thereby to avoid the sin of perjury; but this is a shocking imposition on their own souls.

8. *Swear not at all*—Much has been said in vindication of the propriety of swearing in civil cases before a magistrate, and

much has been said against it. The best way is to have as little to do as possible with oaths. An oath will not bind a knave nor a liar; and an honest man needs none, for his character and conduct swear for him.

9. *Neither by heaven*—Who is there among the traders and people of this world who obey this law? A common swearer is constantly perjuring himself: Such a person should never be trusted. When we make any promise contrary to the command of God, taking, as a pledge of our sincerity, either God, or something belonging to him, we engage that which is not ours, without the Master's consent. God manifests his glory in heaven, as upon his throne; he imprints the footsteps of his perfections upon the earth, his footstool; and shows that his holiness and his grace reign in his temple as the place of his residence. Let it be our constant care to seek and honour God in all his works.

10. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head*—For these plain reasons: (1.) God commands thee not to do it. (2.) Thou hast nothing which is thy own, and thou shouldst not pledge another's property. (3.) It never did, and never can, answer any good purpose. And, (4.) Being a breach of the law of God, it is the way to everlasting misery.

11. *Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay*—That is, a positive affirmation, or negation, according to your knowledge of the matter concerning which you are called to testify. Do not equivocate; mean what you assert, and adhere to your assertion. He who uses any oath, except what he is solemnly called by the magistrate to make, so far from being a Christian, he does not deserve the reputation either of decency or common sense. In some of our old elementary books for children, we have this good maxim: "Never swear: For he that swears will lie; and he that lies will steal; and, if so, what bad things will he not do!"—READING MADE EASY.

SECTION XLII.—BEARING INJURIES, BORROWING AND LENDING.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 38—42.

YE have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil :¹ But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.² And if any man will sue thee at the law,³ and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow⁴ of thee turn not thou away.

1. *Resist not evil*—Or, “the evil person.” Our Lord’s meaning is, “Do not repel one outrage by another.” He that does so, makes himself precisely what the other is,—a wicked person.

2. *Turn to him the other also*—That is, rather than avenge thyself, be ready to suffer patiently a repetition of the same injury. But these exhortations belong to those principally who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Let such leave the judgment of their cause to Him for whose sake they suffer. The Jews always thought that every outrage should be resented ; and thus the spirit of hatred and strife was fostered.

3. *And if any man will sue thee at the law*—Every where our blessed Lord shows the utmost disapprobation of such litigations as tended to destroy brotherly kindness and charity. It is evident, he would have his followers to suffer rather the loss of all their property, than to have recourse to such modes of redress, at so great a risk. Having the mind averse from contentions, and preferring peace and concord to temporal advantages, is most solemnly recommended to all Christians. We are great gainers when we lose only our money, or other property, and risk not the loss of our souls, by losing the love of God and man.

We are here exhorted to patience and forgiveness : (1.) When we receive in our persons all sorts of insults and affronts. (2.) When we are despoiled of our goods. (3.) When our bodies are forced to undergo all kinds of toils, vexations, and

torments. The way to improve the injustice of man to our own advantage, is to exercise under it meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering, without which disposition of mind no man can either be happy here or hereafter ; for he that avenges himself must lose the mind of Christ, and thus suffer an injury ten thousand times greater than he can ever receive from man. Revenge, at such an expense, is dear indeed.

4. *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow*—To give and lend freely to all who are in need, is a general precept from which we are only excused by our inability to perform it. Men are more or less obliged to it as they are more or less able, as the want is more or less pressing, as they are more or less burthened with common poor, or with necessitous relatives. In all these matters, both prudence and charity must be consulted. That God, who makes use of the beggar’s hand to ask our charity, is the same from whom we ourselves beg our daily bread ; and dare we refuse Him ? Let us show at least mildness and compassion, when we can do no more ; and if we cannot or will not relieve a poor man, let us never give him an ill word nor an ill look. If we do not relieve him, we have no right to insult him.

To give, and to lend, are two duties of charity which Christ joins together, and which he sets on equal footing. A rich man is one of God’s stewards : God has given him money for the poor, and he cannot deny it without an act of injustice.

But no man, from what is called a principle of charity or generosity, should give that in alms which belongs to his creditors. Generosity is God-like; but justice has ever, both in law and gospel, the first claim.

A loan is often more beneficial than an absolute gift: (1.) Because it flatters less the vanity of him who lends. (2.) It spares more the shame of him who is in real want. And, (3.) It gives less en-

couragement to the idleness of him who may not be very honest. However, no advantage should be taken of the necessities of the borrower: He who does so is, at least, half a murderer. The lending which our Lord here inculcates is that which requires no more than the restoration of the principal in a convenient time; otherwise to live upon trust is the sure way to pay double.

SECTION XLIII.—LOVE, RESEMBLANCE TO GOD.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW V. 43—48.

YE have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies,¹ bless them that curse you,² do good to them that hate you,³ and pray for them which despitefully use you,⁴ and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil⁵ and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you,⁶ what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father⁷ which is in heaven is perfect.

1. *Love your enemies*—This is the most sublime piece of morality ever given to man. Has it appeared unreasonable and absurd to some? It has. And why? Because it is natural to man to avenge himself, and plague those who plague him; and he will ever find abundant excuse for his conduct, in the repeated evils he receives from others; for men are naturally hostile to each other. Jesus Christ designs to make men happy. Now, he is necessarily miserable who hates another. Our Lord prohibits that only which, from its nature, is opposed to man's happiness. This is, therefore, one of the most reasonable precepts in the universe. "But who can obey it?" None but he who has the mind of Christ. "But I have it not." Seek it from God; it is that kingdom of heaven which Christ came to establish upon earth. This one precept is a sufficient proof of the holiness of the gospel, and of the truth of the Christian religion. Every false religion flatters man, and accommo-

dates itself to his pride and his passions. None but God could have imposed a yoke so contrary to self-love; and nothing but the supreme, eternal Love can enable men to practise a precept so insupportable to corrupt nature.

2. *Bless them that curse you*—Give them good words for their bad words.

3. *Do good to them that hate you*—Give your enemy every proof that you love him. We must not love in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

4. *Pray for them which despitefully use you*—Those who are making continual war upon you, and constantly harassing and calumniating you. "Pray for them:" This is another exquisitely reasonable precept. I cannot change that wicked man's heart; and while it is unchanged he will continue to harass me. God alone can change it; then I must implore him to do that which will at once secure the poor man's salvation, and contribute so much to my own

peace. As a man's child is called his, because a partaker of his own nature; so a holy person is said to be a child of God, because he is a partaker of the divine nature.

5. *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil*—“There is nothing greater than to imitate God in doing good to our enemies. All the creatures of God pronounce the sentence of condemnation on the revengeful; and this sentence is written by the rays of the sun, and with the drops of rain, and, indeed, by all the natural good things, the use of which God freely gives to his enemies.” If God had not loved us while we were his enemies, we could never have become his children; and we shall cease to be such as soon as we cease to imitate him.

6. *For if ye love them which love you*—He who loves only his friends does nothing for God's sake. He who loves for the sake of pleasure or interest pays himself. God has no enemy which he hates but sin: We should have no other.

If not to salute be a heathenish indifference, to hide hatred under outward civilities is a diabolic treachery. To pretend much love and affection for those for whom we have neither; to use towards them complimentary phrases, to which we affix no meaning, but that they mean nothing; is highly offensive in the sight of that God by whom actions are weighed and words judged.

7. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father*—God himself is the grand Law, sole Giver, and only Pattern, of the perfection which he recommends to his children. The words are very emphatic: “Ye shall be, therefore, perfect.” Ye shall be filled with the Spirit of that God whose name is Mercy, and whose nature is love. God has many imitators of his power, independence, jus-

tice, &c., but few of his love, condescension, and kindness. He calls himself “Love,” to teach us that in this consists that perfection, the attainment of which he has made both our duty and privilege; for these words of our Lord include both a command and a promise.

“Can we be fully saved from sin in this world?” is an important question, to which this text gives a satisfactory answer: “Ye shall be perfect, as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect.” As in his infinite nature there is no sin, nothing but goodness and love; so in your finite nature there shall dwell no sin, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make you free from the law of sin and death; God shall live in, fill, and rule your hearts; and, in what He fills and influences, neither satan nor sin can have any part. If men, slighting their own mercies, cry out, “This is impossible;” whom does this arguing reprove? God; who, on this ground, has given a command, the fulfilment of which is impossible. “But who can bring a clean out of an unclean thing?” God Almighty. And however inveterate the disease of sin may be, the grace of the Lord Jesus can fully cure it. And who will say, that he who laid down his life for our souls will not use his power completely to effect that salvation which he has died to procure? “But where is the person thus saved?” Wherever he is found who loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself; and, for the honour of Christianity and its Author, may we not hope there are many such in the church of God? not known, indeed, by any profession of this kind which they make, but by a surer testimony, that of uniformly holy tempers, piety to God, and beneficence to man.

SECTION XLIV.—ALMSGIVING, PRAYER.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VI. 1—8.

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men,¹ to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in

the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.² But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know³ what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: And thy Father which seeth in secret⁴ himself shall reward thee openly.⁵ And when thou prayest,⁶ thou shalt not be as the hypocrites⁷ are: For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets,⁸ that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest,⁹ enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.¹⁰ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,¹¹ as the heathen¹² do: For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of,¹³ before ye ask him.

1. *Before men*—Our Lord does not forbid public alms-giving, fasting, and prayer, but simply censures those vain and hypocritical persons who do these things publicly that they may be seen of men, and receive from them the reputation of saints, &c. Works of charity and mercy should be done as much in private as is consistent with the advancement of the glory of God, and the effectual relief of the poor.

2. *They have their reward*—That is, the honour and esteem of men, which they sought. God is under no obligation to them; they did nothing with an eye to his glory, and from Him they can expect no recompence. They had their recompence in this life; and could expect none in the world to come.

3. *Let not thy left hand know*—In many cases, works of charity must be hidden from even our nearest relatives, who, if they knew, would hinder us from doing what God has given us power and inclination to perform. We must go even farther; and conceal them as far as is possible from ourselves, by not thinking of them, or eying them with complacency. They are given to God, and should be hidden in him.

4. *Which seeth in secret*—We should ever remember that the eye of the Lord is upon us, and that he sees not only the act, but also every motive that led to it.

5. *Shall reward thee openly*—Will give thee the fullest proofs of his acceptance of

thy work of faith, and labour of love, by increasing that substance which, for his sake, thou sharest with the poor; and will manifest his approbation in thy own heart, by the witness of his Spirit.

6. *And when thou prayest*—A proper idea of prayer is, a pouring out of the soul unto God, as a free-will offering, solemnly and eternally dedicated to him, accompanied with the most earnest desire that it may know, love, and serve him alone. He that comes thus to God will ever be heard and blessed. Prayer is the language of dependence; he who prays not is endeavouring to live independently of God: This was the first curse, and continues to be the great curse of mankind. In the beginning satan said, "Eat this fruit; ye shall then be as God;" that is, ye shall be independent: The man hearkened to his voice, sin entered into the world, and, notwithstanding the full manifestation of the deception, the ruinous system is still pursued; man will, if possible, live independently of God; hence he either prays not at all, or uses the language without the spirit of prayer.

7. *Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites*—Properly a stage-player, who acts under a mask, personating a character different from his own; a counterfeit, a dissembler; one who would be thought to be different from what he really is; a person who wishes to be taken for a follower of God, but who has nothing of religion except the outside.

8. *Love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets*—The Jewish phylacterical prayers were long, and the canonical hours obliged them to repeat these prayers wherever they happened to be; and the Pharisees, who were full of vain glory, contrived to be overtaken in the streets by the canonical hour, that they might be seen by the people, and applauded for their great and conscientious piety. As they had no piety but that which was outward, they endeavoured to let it fully appear, that they might make the most of it among the people. It would not have answered their end to kneel before God; for then they might have been unnoticed by men; and consequently have lost that reward which they had in view; namely, the esteem and applause of the multitude. This hypocritical pretension to devotion is common among the Asiatics. Both Hindoos and Mohammedans love to pray in the most public places, at the landing places of rivers, in the public streets, on the roofs of the covered boats, without the least endeavour to conceal their outside devotion, that they may be seen of men.

9. *But thou, when thou prayest*—This is a very impressive and emphatic address. But thou, whosoever thou art, Jew, Pharisee, Christian, enter into thy closet. Prayer is the most secret intercourse of the soul with God, and, as it were, the conversation of one heart with another. The world is too profane and treacherous to be of the secret. We must shut the door against it; endeavour to forget it, with all the affairs which busy and amuse it. Prayer requires retirement, at least of the heart; for this may

be fitly termed the closet in the house of God, which house the body of every real Christian is. To this closet we ought to retire even in public prayer, and in the midst of company.

10. *Reward thee openly*—What goodness is there equal to this of God! to give, not only what we ask, and more than we ask, but to reward even prayer itself! How great advantage is it to serve a Prince who places prayers in the number of services, and reckons to his subjects' account, even their trust and confidence in begging all things of him!

11. *Use not vain repetitions*—Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue. The eloquence of prayer consists in the fervency of desire, and the simplicity of faith. The abundance of fine thoughts, studied and vehement motions, and the order and politeness of the expressions, are things which compose a mere human harangue, not a humble and Christian prayer. Our trust and confidence ought to proceed from that which God is able to do in us, and not from that which we can say to him.

12. *As the heathen*—Unmeaning words, useless repetitions, and complimentary phrases in prayer, are in general the result of Heathenism, hypocrisy, or ignorance.

13. *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of*—Prayer is not designed to inform God, but to give man a sight of his misery; to humble his heart, to excite his desire, to inflame his faith, to animate his hope, to raise his soul from earth to heaven, and to put him in mind that there is his Father, his country, and inheritance.

SECTION XLV.—THE LORD'S PRAYER.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VI. 9—13.

AFTER this manner therefore pray ye: ¹ Our Father ² which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. ³ Thy kingdom come. ⁴ Thy will be done ⁵ in earth, as *it is* in heaven. ⁶ Give us this day our daily bread. ⁷ And forgive us ⁸ our debts, ⁹ as we forgive our debtors. ¹⁰ And lead us not into temptation, ¹¹ but deliver us ¹² from evil: ¹³ For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, ¹⁴ for ever. ¹⁵ Amen. ¹⁶

1. *After this manner therefore pray ye*—What satisfaction must it be to learn from God himself, with what words, and in what manner, he would have us pray to him, so as not to pray in vain! A king, who draws up the petition which he allows to be presented to himself, has doubtless the fullest determination to grant the request. We do not sufficiently consider the value of this prayer; the respect and attention which it requires; the preference to be given to it; its fulness and perfection; the frequent use we should make of it; and the spirit which we should bring with it. "Lord, teach us how to pray," is a prayer necessary to prayer; for unless we are divinely instructed in the manner, and influenced by the spirit of true devotion, even the prayer taught us by Jesus Christ may be repeated without profit to our souls.

2. *Our Father*—It was a maxim of the Jews, that a man should not pray alone, but join with the church; by which they particularly meant that he should, whether alone or with the synagogue, use the plural number, as comprehending all the followers of God.

This prayer was evidently made in a peculiar manner for the children of God. And hence we are taught to say, not *my* Father, but *our* Father. "The heart," says one, "of a child of God is a brotherly heart, in respect of all other Christians; it asks nothing but in the spirit of unity, fellowship, and Christian charity; desiring that for its brethren which it desires for itself."

The word "Father," placed here at the beginning of this prayer, includes two grand ideas, which should serve as a foundation to all our petitions: (1.) That tender and respectful love which we should feel for God, such as that which children feel for their fathers. (2.) That strong confidence in God's love to us, such as fathers have for their children. Thus all the petitions in this prayer stand in strictest reference to the word "Father;" the first three referring to the love we have for God; and the three last, to that confidence which we have in the love he bears to us.

The relation we stand in to this first and best of Beings, dictates to us reverence for his person, zeal for his honour, obedience to his will, submission to his dispensations

and chastisements, and resemblance to his nature.

As the word "sanctified," or hallowed, in scripture, is frequently used for the consecration of a thing or person to a holy use or office,—as the Levites, first-born, tabernacle, temple, and their utensils, which were all set apart from every earthly, common, or profane use, and employed wholly in the service of God,—so the Divine Majesty may be said to be sanctified by us, in analogy to those things, namely, when we separate him from, and in our conceptions and desires exalt him above, earth and all things.

3. *Thy name*—That is, God himself, with all the attributes of his divine nature, his power, wisdom, justice, mercy, &c.

We hallow God's name, (1.) With our lips, when all our conversation is holy, and we speak of those things which are meet to minister grace to the hearers. (2.) In our thoughts, when we suppress every rising evil, and have our tempers regulated by his grace and Spirit. (3.) In our lives, when we begin, continue, and end our works to his glory. If we have an eye to God in all we perform, then every act of our common employment will be an act of religious worship. (4.) In our families, when we endeavour to bring up our children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord; instructing also our servants in the way of righteousness. (5.) In a particular calling or business, when we separate the falsity, deception, and lying, commonly practised, from it; buying and selling as in the sight of the holy and just God.

4. *Thy kingdom come*—The ancient Jews scrupled not to say, "He prays not at all, in whose prayers there is no mention of the kingdom of God." Hence, they were accustomed to say, "Let him cause his kingdom to reign, and his redemption to flourish; and let the Messiah speedily come and deliver his people." "Thy kingdom."

The universal sway of the sceptre of Christ: God has promised that the kingdom of Christ shall be exalted above all kingdoms; that it shall overcome all others, and be at last the universal empire.

5. *Thy will be done*—This petition is properly added to the preceding; for when the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, is established in the heart, there is then an ample provision

made for the fulfilment of the divine will. The will of God is infinitely good, wise, and holy; to have it fulfilled in and among men, is to have infinite goodness, wisdom, and holiness diffused throughout the universe; and earth made the counterpart of heaven.

6. *As it is in heaven*—The Jews maintained, that they were the angels of God upon earth, as those pure spirits were angels of God in heaven: Hence they said, "As the angels sanctify the divine name in heaven, so the Israelites sanctify the divine name upon earth."

Observe, (1.) The salvation of the soul is the result of two wills conjoined; the will of God, and the will of man. If God will not the salvation of man, he cannot be saved; if man will not the salvation God has prepared for him, he cannot be delivered from his sins. (2.) This petition certainly points out a deliverance from all sin; for nothing that is unholly can consist with the divine will; and if this be fulfilled in man, surely sin shall be banished from his soul. (3.) This is further evident from these words, "As it is in heaven;" that is, as the angels do it, namely, with all zeal, diligence, love, delight, and perseverance. (4.) Does not the petition plainly imply, we may live without sinning against God? Surely the holy angels never mingle iniquity with their loving obedience; and as our Lord teaches us to pray, that we do his will here as they do it in heaven, can it be thought he would put a petition in our mouths the fulfilment of which was impossible? (5.) This certainly destroys the assertion, "There is no such state of purification to be attained here, in which it may be said, the soul is redeemed from sinful passions and desires;" for it is on earth that we are commanded to pray that this will, which is our sanctification, may be done. (6.) Our souls can never be truly happy, till our wills be entirely subjected to, and become one with, the will of God. (7.) How can any person offer this petition to his Maker, who thinks of nothing less than the performance of the will of God, and of nothing more than doing his own?

To offer these three petitions with success at the throne of God, three graces, essential to our salvation, must be brought into

exercise; and, indeed, the petitions themselves necessarily suppose them:—

FAITH: "Our Father;" for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.

HOPE: "Thy kingdom come;" for this grace has for its object good things to come.

LOVE: "Thy will be done;" for love is the incentive to, and principle of, all obedience to God, and beneficence to man.

7. *Give us this day our daily bread*— "Bread sufficient for our subsistence and support;" that is, that quantity of food which is necessary to support our health and strength, by being changed into the substance of our bodies.

The word is so very peculiar and expressive, and seems to have been made on purpose by the evangelists, that more than merely bodily nourishment seems to be intended by it. Indeed, many of the primitive fathers understood it as comprehending that daily supply of grace which the soul requires to keep it in health and vigour: He who uses the petition would do well to keep both in view. Observe, (1.) God is the author and dispenser of all temporal as well as spiritual good. (2.) We have merited no kind of good from his hand, and therefore must receive it as a free gift. "Give us," &c. (3.) We must depend on him daily for support; we are not permitted to ask any thing for to-morrow: "Give us to-day." (4.) That petition of the ancient Jews is excellent: "Lord, the necessities of thy people Israel are many, and their knowledge small, so that they know not how to disclose their necessities: Let it be thy good pleasure to give to every man what sufficeth for food!" Thus they expressed their dependence, and left it to God to determine what was best and most suitable. We must ask only that which is essential to our support, God having promised neither luxuries nor superfluities.

8. *Forgive us*—Man has nothing to pay; if his debts are not forgiven, they must stand charged against him for ever, as he is absolutely insolvent. Forgiveness, therefore, must come from the free mercy of God in Christ; and how strange is it, we cannot have the old debt cancelled, without, by that very means, contracting a new one as-

great as the old! But the credit is transferred from justice to mercy. While sinners, we are in debt to infinite justice; when pardoned, in debt to endless mercy; and as a continuance in a state of grace necessarily implies a continual communication of mercy, so the debt goes on increasing *ad infinitum*. Strange economy in the divine procedure, which, by rendering a man an infinite debtor, keeps him eternally dependent on his Creator! How good is God! And what does this state of dependence imply? A union with, and participation of, the Fountain of eternal goodness and felicity!

9. *Our debts*—Sin is represented here under the notion of a debt; and, as our sins are many, they are called here “debts.” God made man that he might live to his glory, and gave him a law to walk by; and if, when he does any thing that tends not to glorify God, he contracts a debt with Divine Justice, how much more is he debtor when he breaks the law by actual transgression! It has been justly observed, “All the attributes of God are reasons of obedience to man; those attributes are infinite; every sin is an act of ingratitude or rebellion against all these attributes; therefore sin is infinitely sinful.”

10. *As we forgive our debtors*—It was a maxim among the ancient Jews, that no man should lie down in his bed without forgiving those who had offended him. That man condemns himself to suffer eternal punishment, who makes use of this prayer with revenge and hatred in his heart. He who will not attend to a condition so advantageous to himself (remitting a hundred pence to his debtor, that his own creditor may remit him ten thousand talents) is a madman, who, to oblige his neighbour to suffer an hour, is himself determined to suffer everlastingly! This condition of forgiving our neighbour, though it cannot possibly merit any thing, yet it is that condition without which God will pardon no man.

11. *And lead us not into temptation*—That is, “Bring us not into sore trial.” The word not only implies violent assaults from *satan*, but also sorely afflictive circumstances, none of which we have, as yet, grace or fortitude sufficient to bear. “Bring us not in,” or “Lead us not in:” God is said

to do a thing which he only permits or suffers to be done.

The process of temptation is often as follows: (1.) A simple evil thought. (2.) A strong imagination, or impression made on the imagination, by the thing to which we are tempted. (3.) Delight in viewing it. (4.) Consent of the will to perform it. Thus lust is conceived, sin is finished, and death brought forth. A man may be tempted, without entering into the temptation: Entering into it implies giving way, closing in with, and embracing it.

12. *Deliver us*—A very expressive word: Break our chains, and loose our bands; snatch, pluck us from the evil, and its calamitous issue.

13. *From evil*—“From the wicked one.” *Satan* is expressly called “the wicked one.” This epithet of “*satan*” comes from labour, sorrow, misery, because of the drudgery which is found in the way of sin, the sorrow that accompanies the commission of it, and the misery which is entailed upon it, and in which it ends.

14. *For thine is the kingdom, the power, and glory*—By the “kingdom,” we may understand that mentioned verse 10. By “power,” that energy by which the kingdom is governed and maintained. By “glory,” the honour that shall redound to God in consequence of the maintenance of the kingdom of grace, in the salvation of men.

15. *For ever and ever*—“To the forever.” “Ever,” in our ancient use of the word, taking in the whole duration of time; the second “ever,” the whole of eternity. May thy name have the glory, both in this world, and in that which is to come. There is no word in any language which more forcibly points out the grand characteristic of eternity—that which always exists. It is often used to signify a limited time, the end of which is not known; but this use of it is only an accommodated one; and it is the grammatical and proper sense of it which must be resorted to in any controversy concerning the word. We sometimes use the phrase, “for evermore,” that is, for ever and more, which signifies the whole of time, and the more or interminable duration beyond it.

16. *Amen*—This word is Hebrew, and signifies “faithful,” or “true.” The

word itself implies a confident resting of the soul in God, with the fullest assurance that all these petitions shall be fulfilled to every one who prays according to the directions given before by our blessed Lord.

SECTION XLVI.—FORGIVENESS, FASTING.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VI. 14—18.

FOR if ye forgive men¹ their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if ye forgive not² men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.³ Moreover when ye fast,⁴ be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance :⁵ For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ;⁶ that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : And thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.⁷

1. *If ye forgive men*—He who shows mercy to men receives mercy from God. For a king to forgive his subjects a hundred millions of treasons against his person and authority, on this one condition, that they will henceforth live peaceably with him and with each other, is what we shall never see ; and yet this is but the shadow of that which Christ promises on his Father's part to all true penitents. A man can have little regard for his salvation, who refuses to have it on such advantageous terms.

2. *But if ye forgive not*—He who does not awake at the sound of so loud a voice, is not asleep, but dead. A vindictive man excludes himself from all hope of eternal life, and himself seals his own damnation.

3. *Trespasses*—What a remarkable difference there is between this word and "debts," in verse 12 ! Men's sins against us are only their stumblings, or fallings off from the duties they owe us ; but ours are debts to God's justice, which we can never discharge. It can be no great difficulty to forgive those, especially when we consider that in many respects we have failed as much, in certain duties which we owed to others, as they have done in those which they owed us. "But I have given him no provocation." Perhaps thou art angry, and art not a proper judge in the matter ;

but, however it may be, it is thy interest to forgive, if thou expectest forgiveness from God.

4. *When ye fast*—A fast means, a total abstinence from food for a certain time. Abstaining from flesh, and living on fish, vegetables, &c., is no fast, or may be rather considered a burlesque on fasting. Many pretend to take the true definition of a fast from Isaiah lviii. 3, and say that it means a fast from sin. This is a mistake ; there is no such term in the Bible as fasting from sin ; the very idea is ridiculous and absurd, as if sin were part of our daily food ! In the fast mentioned by the prophet, the people were to divide their bread with the hungry ; but could they eat their bread, and give it too ? No man should save by a fast : He should give all the food he might have eaten to the poor. He who saves a day's expense by a fast, commits an abomination before the Lord.

5. *As the hypocrites, of a sad countenance*—A hypocrite has always a difficult part to act : When he wishes to appear as a penitent, not having any godly sorrow at heart, he is obliged to counterfeit it the best way he can, by a gloomy and austere look.

6. *Anoint thine head, and wash thy face*—Affect nothing ; dress in thy ordinary manner, and let the whole of thy deport-

ment prove that thou desirest to recommend thy soul to God, and not thy face to men. That factitious mourning, which consists in putting on black clothes, crapes, &c., is utterly inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel of Christ; and, if practised in reference to spiritual matters, is certainly forbidden here: But sin is so common, and so boldly persisted in, that not even a crape is put on, as an evidence of deploring its influence, or of sorrow for having committed it.

7. *Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*—Let us not be afraid that our hearts can be concealed from God; but let us fear lest he perceive them to be more desirous of the praise of men than they are of that glory which comes from Him.

“By great numbers in these times, fasting is entirely laid aside, and too frequently treated with derision and contempt. Yet from this very passage, we may learn, that it ought to be considered in a much more serious light; for although our Saviour did not command his disciples to fast whilst he was with them, yet he himself fasted for forty days. He here plainly supposes that his disciples did sometimes fast; and gives them directions how to perform that duty in a manner acceptable to God. And it appears also, that if they did so perform it, if they fasted without any ostentation or parade, with a design not to catch the applause of men, but to approve themselves to God, he assured them ‘they should have their reward.’”—BISHOP PORTER.

SECTION XLVII.—LAYING UP TREASURE, A SINGLE EYE.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VI. 19—24.

LAY not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,¹ where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,² where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is,³ there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye:⁴ If therefore thine eye be single,⁵ thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters:⁶ For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

1. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*—What blindness is it for a man to lay up that as a treasure which must necessarily perish! A heart designed for God and eternity is terribly degraded by being fixed on those things which are subject to corruption. “But may we not lay up treasure innocently?” Yes, (1.) If you can do it without setting your heart on it, which is almost impossible. And, (2.) If there be neither widows nor orphans,

destitute nor distressed persons, in the place where you live. “But there is a portion which belongs to my children; shall I distribute that among the poor?” If it belongs to your children, it is not yours, and therefore you have no right to dispose of it. “But I have a certain sum in stock, &c; shall I take that, and divide it among the poor?” By no means; for, by doing so, you would put it out of your power to do good after the present division: Keep your

principal, and devote—if you possibly can spare it—the product to the poor; and thus you shall have the continual ability to do good. In the mean time, take care not to shut up your bowels of compassion against a brother in distress; if you do, the love of God cannot dwell in you.

2. *Lay up treasures in heaven*—“The only way to render perishing goods eternal, to secure stately furniture from moths, the richest metals from canker, and precious stones from thieves, is to transmit them to heaven, by acts of charity. This is a kind of bill of exchange, which cannot fail of acceptance but through our own fault.”

It is certain we have not the smallest portion of temporal good but what we have received from the unmerited bounty of God; and if we give back to him all we have received, yet still there is no merit that can fairly attach to the act, as the goods were the Lord's; for I am not to suppose, that I can purchase any thing from a man by his own property. On this ground, the doctrine of human merit is one of the most absurd that ever was published among men, or credited by sinners. Yet he who supposes he can purchase heaven by giving that meat which was left at his own table, and that of his servants, or by giving a garment which he could no longer in decency wear, must have a base, ignorant soul, and a very mean opinion of the heaven he hopes for. “But shall not such works as these be rewarded?” Yes, yes; God will take care to give you all that your refuse victuals and old clothes are worth. Yet he who, through love to God and man, divides his bread with the hungry, and covers the naked with a garment, shall not lose his reward; a reward which the mercy of God appoints, but to which, in strict justice, he can lay no claim.

3. *Where your treasure is*—If God be the treasure of our souls, our hearts, that is, our affections and desires, will be placed on things above. An earthly-minded man proves that his treasure is below; a heavenly-minded man shows that his treasure is above.

4. *The light of the body is the eye*—That is, the eye is to the body what the sun is to the universe in the day-time, or a lamp or candle to a house at night.

5. *If thine eye be single*—“Simple;”

“uncompounded;” that is, so perfect in its structure, as to see objects distinctly and clearly, and not confusedly, or in different places to what they are, as is often the case in certain disorders of the eye; one object appearing two or more, or else in a different situation, and of a different colour, to what it really is. This state of the eye is termed “evil,” that is, diseased, or defective. An “evil eye,” was a phrase in use among the ancient Jews, to denote an envious, covetous man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbour's prosperity, loved his own money, and would do nothing in the way of charity for God's sake. Our blessed Lord, however, extends and sublimates this meaning; and uses the “sound eye” as a metaphor to point out that simplicity of intention, and purity of affection, with which men should pursue the supreme good. We cannot draw more than one straight line between two indivisible points. We aim at happiness: It is found only in one thing,—the indivisible and eternal God. If the line of simple intention be drawn straight to him, and the soul walk by it, with purity of affection, the whole man shall be “light in the Lord;” the rays of that excellent glory shall irradiate the mind, and through the whole spirit shall the divine nature be transfused. But if a person who enjoyed this heavenly treasure permit his simplicity of intention to deviate from heavenly to earthly good; and his purity of affection to be contaminated by worldly ambition, secular profits, and animal gratifications, then “the light which was in him becomes darkness;” that is, his spiritual discernment departs, and his union with God is destroyed; all is only a palpable obscure; and, like a man who has totally lost his sight, he walks without direction, certainty, or comfort. This state is most forcibly intimated in our Lord's exclamation, “How great a darkness!” Who can adequately describe the misery and wretchedness of that soul which has lost its union with the Fountain of all good? and, in losing this, has lost the possibility of happiness till the simple eye be once more given, and the straight line once more drawn.

6. *No man can serve two masters*—The master of our heart may be fitly termed the “love” that reigns in it. We serve

that only which we love supremely. A man cannot be in perfect indifference between two objects which are incompatible; he is inclined to despise and hate whatever he does not love supremely, when the necessity of a choice presents itself.

Our blessed Lord shows here the utter impossibility of loving the world and loving God at the same time; or, in other words,

that a man of the world cannot be a truly religious character. He who gives his heart to the world robs God of it; and, in snatching at the shadow of earthly good, loses substantial and eternal blessedness. How dangerous is it to set our hearts upon riches, seeing it is so easy to make them our god!

SECTION XLVIII.—CONTENTMENT.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VI. 25—34.

THEFORE I say unto you,¹ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air:² For they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?³ And why take ye thought for raiment?⁴ Consider⁵ the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field,⁶ which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?⁷ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: ⁸) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.⁹ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: ¹⁰ For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.¹¹

1. *Therefore I say unto you*—Prudent care is never forbidden by our Lord, but only that anxious, distracting solicitude, which, by dividing the mind, and drawing it different ways, renders it utterly incapable of attending to any solemn or important concern. To be anxiously careful concerning the means of subsistence, is to lose all satisfaction and comfort in the things which God gives, and to act as a mere infidel. On the other hand, to rely

so much upon providence as not to use the very powers and faculties with which the Divine Being has endowed us, is to tempt God. If we labour without placing our confidence in our labour, but expect all from the blessing of God, we obey his will, co-operate with his providence, set the springs of it a-going on our behalf, and thus imitate Christ and his followers by a sedate care and an industrious confidence. In this and the following verses, our Lord

lays down several reasons why men should not disquiet themselves about the wants of life, or concerning the future.

The first is, the experience of greater benefits already received. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Can he who gave us our body, and breathed into it the breath of life, before we could ask them from him, refuse us that which is necessary to preserve both, and when we ask it in humble confidence?

2. *Behold the fowls of the air*—The second reason why we should not be anxiously concerned about the future, is the example of the smaller animals, which the providence of God feeds without their own labour; though he be not their Father. We never knew an earthly father take care of his fowls, and neglect his children; and shall we fear this from our heavenly Father? God forbid! That man is utterly unworthy to have God for his Father, who depends less upon his goodness, wisdom, and power, than upon a crop of corn, which may be spoiled either in the field or in the barn. If our great Creator have made us capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying himself eternally, what may we not expect from him, after so great a gift?

3. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*—The third reason against these carking cares, is the unprofitableness of human solicitude, unless God vouchsafe to bless it. What can our uneasiness do but render us still more unworthy of the divine care? The passage from distrust to apostasy is very short and easy; and a man is not far from murmuring against providence, who is dissatisfied with its conduct. We should depend as fully upon God for the preservation of his gifts as for the gifts themselves.

"This form of speech is sometimes used in the east to humble those of high pretensions: Thus, a man of low caste, who has become rich, and who assumes authority over his better-born, though poor, neighbours, will be asked, 'What! has your money made you a cubit higher?' that is, in the scale of being. Is a man ambitious of rising in society; a person who wishes to annoy him, puts his finger on his elbow, and showing that part to the tip of the middle finger, asks, 'Friend, will you

ever rise thus much, (a cubit,) after all your cares?"—J. ROBERTS.

4. *And why take ye thought for raiment?*—Or, "Why are ye anxiously careful about raiment?" The fourth reason against such inquietudes, is the example of inanimate creatures: The herbs and flowers of the field have their being, nourishment, exquisite flavours, and beautiful hues from God himself. They are not only without anxious care, but also without care or thought of every kind. Your being, its excellence and usefulness, do not depend on your anxious concern: They spring as truly from the beneficence and continual superintendence of God, as the flowers of the field do; and were you brought into such a situation, as to be as utterly incapable of contributing to your own preservation and support as the lilies of the field are to theirs, your heavenly Father could augment your substance, and preserve your being, when for his glory and your own advantage.

5. *Consider*—Diligently consider this, lay it earnestly to heart, and let your confidence be unshaken in the God of infinite bounty and love.

6. *If God so clothe the grass of the field*—Christ confounds both the luxury of the rich in their superfluities, and the distrust of the poor as to the necessaries of life. Let man, who is made for God and eternity, learn from a flower of the field how low the care of Providence stoops. All our inquietudes and distrusts proceed from lack of faith; that supplies all wants. The poor are not really such, but because they are destitute of faith.

7. *What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? &c.*—These three inquiries engross the whole attention of those who are living without God in the world. The belly and back of a worldling are his compound god; and these he worships in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eye, and in the pride of life.

8. *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek*—The fifth reason against solicitude about the future is, that to concern ourselves about these wants with anxiety, as if there was no such thing as a providence in the world; with great affection towards earthly enjoyments, as if we expected no other; and without praying to God, or

consulting his will, as if we could do any thing without him; this is to imitate the worst kind of Heathens, who live without hope, and without God in the world.

9. *Your heavenly Father knoweth, &c.*

—The sixth reason against this anxiety about the future is, because God, our heavenly Father, is infinite in wisdom, and knows all our wants. It is the property of a wise and tender father to provide necessaries, and not superfluities, for his children. Not to expect the former, is an offence to his goodness; to expect the latter, is injurious to his wisdom.

The seventh reason against these worldly cares and fears is, because the business of our salvation ought to engross us entirely; hither all our desires, cares, and inquiries ought to tend. Grace is the way to glory, holiness the way to happiness. If men be not righteous, there is no heaven to be had: If they be, they shall have heaven and earth too; for godliness has the promise of both lives.

10. *Take therefore no thought*—That is, “Be not therefore anxiously careful.” The eighth and last reason, against this preposterous conduct is, that carking care is not only useless in itself, but renders us miserable beforehand. The future falls under the cognizance of God alone; we encroach, therefore, upon his rights, when we would fain foresee all that may happen to us, and secure ourselves from it by our cares. How much good is omitted, how many evils caused, how many duties

neglected, how many innocent persons deserted, how many good works destroyed, how many truths suppressed, and how many acts of injustice authorized, by those timorous forecasts of what may happen, and those faithless apprehensions concerning the future! Let us do now what God requires of us, and trust the consequences to him. The future time which God would have us foresee and provide for, is that of judgment and eternity; and it is about this alone that we are careless!

11. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*—“Sufficient for each day is its own calamity.” Each day has its peculiar trials; we should meet them with confidence in God. As we should live but a day at a time, so we should take care to suffer no more evils in one day than are necessarily attached to it. He who neglects the present for the future is acting opposite to the order of God, his own interest, and to every dictate of sound wisdom. Let us live for eternity, and we shall secure all that is valuable in time.

“The solicitude, therefore, about these things forbidden here, is, (1.) A solicitude arising from a want of faith, or a surmise, that divine goodness may be wanting to us in things his wisdom seeth needful for us. (2.) A regard to these things more than spirituals, and with a comparative neglect of them. (3.) Such a solicitude for these things as makes us anxious, rends and afflicts our hearts with fears, lest we should want them.”—WHITBY.

SECTION XLIX.—RASH JUDGMENT, ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VII. 1—11.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged.¹ For with what judgment² ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote³ that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say⁴ to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite,⁵ first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy⁶ unto the dogs, neither

cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock,⁷ and it shall be opened unto you : For every one that asketh receiveth ;⁸ and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son⁹ ask bread, will he give him a stone ?¹⁰ Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye then, being evil,¹¹ know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?

1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged*—These exhortations are pointed against rash, harsh, and uncharitable judgments, the thinking evil where no evil seems, and speaking of it accordingly. This is one of the most important exhortations in the whole of this excellent sermon. By a secret and criminal disposition of nature, man endeavours to elevate himself above others, and, to do it more effectually, depresses them. His jealous and envious heart wishes, that there may be no good quality found but in himself, that he alone may be esteemed. Such is the state of every unconverted man ; and it is from this criminal disposition, that evil surmises, rash judgments, precipitate decisions, and all other unjust procedures against our neighbour, flow.

2. *For with what judgment*—He who is severe on others will naturally excite their severity against himself. The censures and calumnies which we have suffered are probably the just reward of those which we have dealt out to others.

3. *And why beholdest thou the mote*—It often happens that the faults which we consider as of the first enormity in others are, to our own iniquities, as a chip is when compared to a large beam. On one side, self-love blinds us to ourselves ; and, on the other, envy and malice give us piercing eyes in respect of others. When we shall have as much zeal to correct ourselves, as we have inclination to reprove and correct others, we shall know our own defects better than now we know those of our neighbour.

4. *Or how will thou say*—That man is utterly unfit to show the way of life to others who is himself walking in the way of death.

5. *Thou hypocrite*—A hypocrite, who professes to be what he is not, (namely, a true Christian,) is obliged, for the support of the character he has assumed, to imitate all the dispositions and actions of a Christian ; consequently he must reprove sin, and endeavour to show an uncommon affection for the glory of God. Our Lord unmasks this vile pretender to saintship, and shows him that his hidden hypocrisy, covered with the garb of external sanctity, is more abominable in the sight of God than the openly-professed and practised iniquity of the profligate.

6. *Give not that which is holy*—As a general meaning of this passage, we may just say : “ The sacrament of the Lord’s supper, and other holy ordinances which are only instituted for the genuine followers of Christ, are not to be dispensed to those who are continually returning like the snarling ill-natured dog to their easily-predominant sins of rash judgment, barking at and tearing the characters of others by evil-speaking, backbiting and slandering ; nor to him who, like the swine, is frequently returning to wallow in the mud of sensual gratifications and impurities.”

7. *Ask, seek, knock*—These three words include the ideas of want, loss, and earnestness.

“ Ask : ” Turn beggar at the door of mercy : Thou art destitute of all spiritual good, and it is God alone who can give it to thee ; and thou hast no claim but what his mercy has given thee on itself.

“ Seek : ” Thou hast lost thy God, thy paradise, thy soul. Look about thee ; leave no stone unturned : There is no peace, no final salvation for thee, till thou get thy soul restored to the favour and image of God.

“Knock :” Be in earnest, be importunate : Eternity is at hand ! and, if thou die in thy sins, where God is thou shalt never come.

“Ask ” with confidence and humility.

“Seek ” with care and application.

“Knock ” with earnestness and perseverance.

8. *For every one that asketh receiveth*—Prayer is always heard after one manner or other. No soul can pray in vain that prays as directed above. The truth and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus are pledged for its success. “Ye shall receive, ye shall find, it shall be opened.” These words are as strongly binding on the side of God, as “Thou shalt do no murder” is on the side of man. Bring Christ’s word, and Christ’s sacrifice with thee, and not one of heaven’s blessings can be denied thee.

9. *Or what man is there, whom if his son*—Men are exhorted to come unto God, with the persuasion that he is a most gra-

acious and compassionate Parent, who possesses all heavenly and earthly good, knows what is necessary for each of his creatures, and is infinitely ready to communicate that which they need most.

10. *Will he give him a stone ?*—Will he not readily give him bread, if he have it ?

11. *If ye then, being evil*—Who are radically and diabolically depraved, yet feel yourselves led, by natural affection, to give those things to your children which are necessary to support their lives, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, whose nature is infinite goodness, mercy, and grace, “give good things,” his grace and Spirit, to them who ask him ? What a picture is here given of the goodness of God ! Reader, ask thy soul, Could this heavenly Father reprobate to unconditional, eternal damnation any creature he has made ? He who can believe that he has, may believe any thing : But still “God is love.”

SECTION L.—THE STRAIT GATE, FALSE TEACHERS.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VII. 12—20.

THEREFORE all things whatsoever ye would that men¹ should do to you, do ye even so to them : For this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate : For wide *is* the gate,² and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : Because strait *is* the gate,³ and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.⁴ Beware of false prophets,⁵ which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.⁶ Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? Even so every good tree⁷ bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,⁸ neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit⁹ is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.¹⁰

1. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men*—This is a most sublime precept, and highly worthy of the grandeur and beneficence of the just God who gave it. The general meaning of it is this :

“Guided by justice and mercy, do unto all men as you would have them to do to you, were your circumstances and theirs reversed.” Yet this saying may be misunderstood. “If the prisoner should ask

the judge, whether he would be content to be hanged, were he in his case, he would answer, 'No.' 'Then,' says the prisoner, 'do as you would be done to.' Neither of them must do as private men; but the judge must do by him as they have publicly agreed; that is, both judge and prisoner have consented to a law, that if either of them steal he shall be hanged." None but he whose heart is filled with love to God and all mankind can keep this precept, either in its spirit or letter. Self-love will feel itself sadly cramped when brought within the limits of this precept; but God hath spoken it: It is the spirit and design of the law and the prophets; the sum of all that is laid down in the sacred writings, relative to men's conduct towards each other.

2. *For wide is the gate*—Intimating, that it is much more congenial to the revengeful, covetous heart of fallen man, to take every advantage of another, and to enrich himself at his expense, rather than to walk according to the rule laid down before, by our blessed Lord; and that acting contrary to it is the way to everlasting misery. With those who say it means repentance, and forsaking sin, I can have no controversy. That is certainly a gate, and a strait one too, through which every sinner must turn to God, in order to find salvation. But the doing to every one as we would they should do unto us, is a gate extremely strait, and very difficult, to every unregenerate mind.

3. *Because strait is the gate*—How strait is that gate! This mode of expression more forcibly points out the difficulty of the way to the kingdom. How strange is it, that men should be unwilling to give up their worldly interests to secure their everlasting salvation! And yet no interest need be abandoned, but that which is produced by injustice and unkindness. Reason, as well as God, says, such people should be excluded from a place of blessedness. He who shows no mercy, (and much more he who shows no justice,) shall have judgment without mercy.

"How strait is the gate, how narrow is the way, that leadeth to life! In the way, nothing is to be found that flatters the flesh, but many things opposite to it; poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity,

sobriety. And as for the gate, it receives none that are swollen with the glory of this life; none that are elated and lengthened out with pride; none that are distended with luxury; it does not admit those who are laden with the fardels of riches, nor those that drag along with them the other implements of the world. None can pass through it but naked men, who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and who, having, as it were, put off their bodies, are emaciated into spirits; which is the reason that it is sought after by so few."—ERASMUS.

4. *Few there be that find it*—The way to the kingdom of God is made sufficiently manifest; the completest assistance is promised in the way, and the greatest encouragement to persevere to the end is held out in the everlasting gospel. But men are so wedded to their own passions, and so determined to follow the imaginations of their own hearts, that still it may be said, There are few who find the way to heaven; fewer yet who abide any time in it; fewer still who walk in it; and fewest of all who persevere unto the end. Nothing renders this way either narrow or difficult to any person, but sin. Let all the world leave their sins, and all the world may walk abreast in this good way.

5. *Beware of false prophets*—By false prophets, we are to understand teachers of erroneous doctrines, who come professing a commission from God, but whose aim is not to bring the heavenly treasure to the people, but rather to rob them of their earthly good. Teachers who preach for hire, having no motive to enter into the ministry but "to get a living," as it is ominously called by some, however they may bear the garb and appearance of the innocent, useful sheep, the true pastors commissioned by the Lord Jesus, or to whatever name, class, or party they may belong, are, in the sight of the heart-searching God, no other than ravenous wolves, whose design is to feed themselves with the fat, and clothe themselves with the fleece, and thus ruin, instead of save, the flock.

6. *Ye shall know them by their fruits*—The judgment formed of a man by his general conduct, is a safe one: If the judgment be not favourable to the person, that is his fault, as you have your opinion

of him from his works, that is, the confession of his own heart.

7. *So every good tree*—As the thorn can only produce thorns, not grapes; and the thistle, not figs, but prickles; so an unregenerate heart will produce fruits of degeneracy. As we perfectly know that a good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not, cannot, produce good fruit; so we know that the profession of godliness, while the life is ungodly, is imposture, hypocrisy, and deceit. A man cannot be a saint and a sinner at the same time. Let us remember, that as the good tree means a good heart, and the good fruit, a holy life, and that every heart is naturally vicious; so there is none but God who can pluck up the vicious tree, create a good heart, plant, cultivate, water, and make it continually fruitful in righteousness and true holiness.

8. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*—Love to God and man is the root of the good tree; and from this principle all its fruit is found. To teach, as some have

done, that a state of salvation may be consistent with the greatest crimes, (such as murder and adultery in David,) or that the righteous necessarily sin in all their best works, is really to make the good tree bring forth bad fruit, and to give the lie to the Author of eternal truth.

9. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*—What a terrible sentence is this against Christless pastors, and Christless hearers! Every tree that produceth not good fruit is to be now cut down; the act of excision is now taking place: The curse of the Lord is even now on the head and the heart of every false teacher and impenitent hearer.

10. *Wherefore by their fruits, &c.*—This truth is often repeated, because our eternal interests depend so much upon it. Not to have good fruit, is to have evil: There can be no innocent sterility in the invisible tree of the heart. He that brings forth no fruit, and he that brings forth bad fruit, are both only fit for the fire.

SECTION LI.—THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH BUILDERS.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW VII. 21—29.

NOT every one¹ that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day,² Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess³ unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me,⁴ ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man,⁵ which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,⁶ and beat upon that house; and it fell not: For it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not,⁷ shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: And great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished⁸ at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority,⁹ and not as the scribes.

1. *Not every one*—No person, by merely acknowledging my authority, believing in the divinity of my nature, professing faith in the perfection of my righteousness, and infinite merit of my atonement, “shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” shall have any part with God in glory; but “he who doeth the will of my Father;” he who gets the bad tree rooted up, the good tree planted, and continues to bring forth fruit to the glory and praise of God.

2. *Many will say to me in that day*—The day of judgment: “Have we not prophesied,” taught, publicly preached, “in thy name;” acknowledging thee to be the only Saviour, and proclaiming thee as such to others; “cast out demons,” impure spirits, who had taken possession of the bodies of men; “done many miracles,” being assisted by supernatural agency to invert even the course of nature, and thus prove the truth of the doctrine we preached?

3. *Will I profess*—“I will fully and plainly tell them, I never knew you;” “I never approved of you;” for so the word is used in many places, both in the Old and New Testaments. You held the truth in unrighteousness, while you preached my pure and holy doctrine; and for the sake of my own truth, and through my love to the souls of men, I blessed your preaching; but yourselves I could never esteem, because ye were destitute of the spirit of my gospel, unholy in your hearts, and unrighteous in your conduct. Alas! alas! how many preachers are there who appear prophets in their pulpits; how many writers, and other evangelical workmen, the miracles of whose labour, learning, and doctrine, we admire, who are nothing, and worse than nothing, before God, because they perform not his will, but their own! What an awful consideration, that a man of eminent gifts, whose talents are a source of public utility, should be only as a way-mark or finger-post in the way to eternal bliss, pointing out the road to others, without walking in it himself!

4. *Depart from me*—What a terrible word! What a dreadful separation! “Depart from me!” from the very Jesus whom you have proclaimed, in union with whom alone eternal life is to be found. For, united to Christ, all is heaven; separated from him, all is hell.

5. *I will liken him unto a wise man*—A prudent man, a man of sense and understanding, who, foreseeing the evil, hideth himself, who proposes to himself the best end, and makes use of the proper means to accomplish it. True wisdom consists in getting the building of our salvation completed: To this end, we must build on the “Rock, Christ Jesus,” and make the building firm, by keeping close to the maxims of his gospel, and having our tempers and lives conformed to its word and spirit; and when, in order to this, we lean on nothing but the grace of Christ, we then build upon a solid Rock.

6. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew*—There are three general kinds of trials to which the followers of God are exposed; and to which, some think, our Lord alludes here: (1.) Those of temporal afflictions, coming in the course of divine providence; these may be likened to the torrents of rain. (2.) Those which come from the passions of men, and which may be likened to the impetuous rivers. (3.) Those which come from satan and his angels, and which, like tempestuous whirlwinds, threaten to carry every thing before them. He alone, whose soul is built on the “Rock of Ages,” stands all these shocks; and not only stands in, but profits, by them.

“The rains and floods of an eastern monsoon give a striking illustration of this passage. When people in those regions speak of the strength of a house, it is not by saying, ‘It will last so many years,’ but, ‘It will withstand the rains, it will not be injured by the floods.’”—
J. ROBERTS.

7. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not*—Was there ever a stricter system of morality delivered by God to man, than in this sermon? He who reads or hears it, and does not look to God to conform his soul and life to it, and notwithstanding is hoping to enter into the kingdom of heaven, is like the fool who built his house on the sand. When the rain, the rivers, and the winds come, his building must fall, and his soul be crushed into the nethermost pit by its ruins. Talking about Christ, his righteousness, merits, and atonement, while the person is not conformed to his word and

Spirit, is no other than solemn self-deception.

Let it be observed, that it is not the man who hears or believes these sayings of Christ, whose building shall stand when the earth and its works are burned up; but the man who does them.

Many suppose that the law of Moses is abolished, merely because it is too strict, and impossible to be observed; and that the gospel was brought in to liberate us from its obligations; but let all such know, that in the whole of the old covenant nothing can be found so exceedingly strict and holy as this sermon, which Christ lays down as the rule by which we are to walk. "Then, the fulfilling of these precepts is the purchase of glory." No, it is the way only to that glory which has already been purchased by the blood of the Lamb. To him that believes all things are possible.

"The unprofitable hearer is not cemented to Christ by faith, but laid loose, as it were, upon a sandy foundation, and so slips beside the ground-work in foul weather. He is not set into the stock as a scion, but only stuck into the ground as a stake, and is therefore easily pulled up. Whereas the true Christian is knit fast to Christ, the Rock, by the ligament of a lively faith; and, as a lively stone, is built up a spiritual house, growing up in the mystical body with so much sweetness and evenness, as if the whole temple were but one entire stone: 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.'"—JOHN TRAPP.

8. *The people were astonished*—They heard the law defined in such a manner as

they had never thought of before; and this sacred system of morality urged home on their consciences with such clearness and authority as they had never felt under the teaching of their scribes and Pharisees. Here is the grand difference between the teaching of scribes and Pharisees, the self-created or men-made ministers, and those whom God sends. The first may preach what is called very good and very sound doctrine; but it comes with no authority from God to the souls of the people: Therefore, the unholy is unholy still; because preaching can only be effectual to the conversion of men, when the unction of the Holy Spirit is in it; and, as these are not sent by the Lord, therefore they shall not profit the people at all.

9. *Having authority*—They felt a commanding power and authority in his word, that is, his doctrine. His statements were perspicuous; his exhortations persuasive, his doctrine sound and rational, and his arguments irresistible. These they never felt in the trifling teachings of their most celebrated doctors, who consumed their own time, and that of their disciples and hearers, with frivolous cases of conscience, ridiculous distinctions, and puerile splittings of controversial hairs; questions not calculated to minister grace to the hearers.

Thus ends a sermon, the most strict, pure, holy, profound, and sublime, ever delivered to man; and yet so amazingly simple is the whole that almost a child may apprehend it! Lord! write all these thy sayings upon our hearts, we beseech thee! Amen.

SECTION LII.—CHRIST HEALS A LEPER.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW VIII. 2—4; MARK I. 40—45; LUKE V. 12—16.

AND, behold, there came a man full of leprosy,¹ who seeing Jesus, and kneeling down to him, fell on *his* face, worshipped him, and besought him, saying unto him, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.² And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.³ And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.⁴ And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man:⁵ But go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer

for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, *and* so much the more went there a fame abroad of him; insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, *for* great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. But he withdrew himself into the wilderness,⁶ and was without in desert places, and prayed: And they came to him from every quarter.⁷

1. *There came a man full of leprosy*—The eastern leprosy was a distemper of the most loathsome kind, highly contagious, so as to infect garments and houses, and was deemed incurable by any human means. Among the Jews, God alone was applied to for its removal; and the cure was ever attributed to his sovereign power. The various symptoms of this dreadful disorder, which was a striking emblem of sin, may be seen in Lev. xiii. and xiv., where also may be read the legal ordinances concerning it; which, as, on the one hand, they set forth how odious sin is to God, so, on the other, they represent the cleansing of our pollutions by the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, by the sprinkling and application of his blood, and by the sanctifying and healing influences of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*—As this leper may be considered as a fit emblem of the corruption of man by sin, so may his cure, of the redemption of the soul by Christ. A sinner, truly penitent, seeks God with a respectful faith; approaches him in the spirit of adoration; humbles himself under his mighty hand, acknowledging the greatness of his fall, and the vileness of his sin; his prayer, like that of the leper, should be humble, plain, and full of confidence in that God who can do all things, and of dependence upon his will or mercy, from which all good must be derived. It is peculiar to God that he need only will what he intends to perform. His power is his will. The ability of God to do what is necessary to be done, and his willingness to make his creatures happy, should be deeply considered by all those who approach him in prayer. The leper had no doubt of the former, but he was far from being equally satisfied in respect of the latter.

3. *Jesus put forth his hand, and saith, I will; be thou clean*—The most sovereign authority is assumed in this speech of our blessed Lord, "I will:" There is here no supplication of any power superior to his own; and the event proved to the fullest conviction, and by the clearest demonstration, that his authority was absolute, and his power unlimited. "Be thou cleansed!" A single word is enough.

4. *And immediately his leprosy departed from him*—What an astonishing sight! A man whose whole body was covered over with the most loathsome disease, cleansed from it in a moment of time! Was it possible for any soul to resist the evidence of this fact? This action of Christ is a representation of that invisible hand which makes itself felt by the most insensible heart; of that internal word which makes itself heard by the most deaf; and of that supreme will which works every thing according to its own counsel.

"No doubt all the miracles performed by our Lord were types, as well as attestations. They exhibited his compassion, and they hold him forth under that affecting character, which he himself professed, the 'Physician of souls.' The true resemblance was not, however, designed to be pursued into minute particulars, which, as they rest on mere human authority, are without authority; and it is enough for us to know, that he both can and will make clean from sin all who come to him in the same spirit as this poor leper."—R. WATSON.

5. *See thou say nothing to any man*—Had our Lord, at this early period, fully manifested himself as the Messiah, the people in all likelihood would have proclaimed him King: This, however refused by him, must have excited the hatred of the Jewish rulers, and the jealousy of the

Roman government ; and, speaking after the manner of men, his farther preachings and miracles must have been impeded. This alone seems to be the reason why he said to the leper, "See thou tell no man."

"But our blessed Lord gives no such charge to us. If he has made us clean from our leprosy of sin, we are not commanded to conceal it. On the contrary, it is our duty to publish it abroad, both for the honour of our Benefactor, and that others who are sick of sin may be encouraged to ask and hope for the same benefit."—WESLEY.

"There came a leper." (i.) Consider this leper. (i.) He heard of Jesus and his miracles. (ii.) He came to him for a cure, conscious of his disease. (iii.) He earnestly besought him to grant the mercy he needed. (iv.) He fell down on his knees, (with his face to the earth,) thus showing his humbled state, and the distress of his soul. (v.) He appealed to his love: "If thou wilt;" with a full conviction of his ability, "Thou canst;" in order to get healed.

(2.) Consider Jesus. (i.) He is moved with tender compassion towards him: This is the alone source of all human salvation. (ii.) He stretches forth his hand, showing thus his readiness to relieve him. (iii.) He touches him; though this was prohibited by the law, and rendered him who did it in any common case legally unclean. (iv.) He proves at once his infinite love and unlimited power, by his word and by his act; "I will; be thou cleansed; and immediately his leprosy was removed."

6. *But he withdrew himself into the wilderness*—"He frequently withdrew into the desert." He made it a frequent custom to withdraw from the multitudes for a time, and pray, teaching hereby the ministers of the gospel that they are to receive fresh supplies of light and power from God by prayer, that they may be the more successful in their work; and that they ought to seek frequent opportunities of being in

private with God and their books. A man can give nothing unless he first receive it: and no man can be successful in the ministry, who does not constantly depend upon God; for the excellence of the power is all from him. Why is there so much preaching, and so little good done? Is it not because the preachers mix too much with the world, keep too long in the crowd, and are so seldom in private with God? Reader, art thou a herald for the Lord of Hosts? Make full proof of thy ministry. Let it never be said of thee, "He forsook all to follow Christ, and to preach his gospel, but there was little or no fruit of his labour; for he ceased to be a man of prayer, and got into the spirit of the world." Alas! alas! is this luminous star, that was once held in the right hand of Jesus, fallen from the firmament of heaven, down to the earth!

7. *And they came to him from every quarter*—So generally had the poor man, who was cleansed of his leprosy, spread abroad his fame. And can we suppose that, of all these people who came to him from all parts, and to whom he preached the glad tidings of the kingdom, by the power and authority of God, few or none were saved? This is a common opinion; but every person who seriously considers it must see that it is unfounded. Without doubt, Christ had thousands that were brought to God by his ministry; though, in general, only those are mentioned who were constant attendants on his person. It would be strange, if, while God manifested in the flesh was preacher, there should be few brought to the knowledge of themselves, and of the truth! In this respect he does not permit his faithful ministers to labour in vain. The Son of Man sowed the seed of the kingdom; and it afterwards produced a plentiful harvest. Multitudes of Jews were converted by the preaching of the gospel; and the first Christian church was founded at Jerusalem.

SECTION LIII.—THE PARALYTIC CURED.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW IX. 2—8; MARK II. 1—12; LUKE V. 17—26.

AND again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: And he preached the word unto them. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: And the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. And, behold, men came unto him, bringing a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, which was borne of four: And they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, *nor* find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, uncovered the roof where he was, and, when they had broken *it* up, they let him down through the tiling with *his* couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.¹ And, behold, certain of the scribes and Pharisees sitting there began to reason within themselves, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?² And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, knowing their thoughts,³ he answering said unto them, Why reason ye these things? Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?⁴ But that ye may know⁵ that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed,⁶ and go thy way unto thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up the bed,⁷ and went forth before them all, and departed to his own house, glorifying God;⁸ insomuch that when the multitudes saw *it*, they marvelled, and were all amazed, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men, and were filled with fear, saying, We never saw it on this fashion: We have seen strange things to-day.

1. *Thy sins are forgiven thee*—Moral evil has been the cause of all the natural evil in the world. Christ goes to the source of the malady, which is sin; and to that, as the procuring cause, we should refer in all our afflictions. It is probable that this

paralytic person had, in the earnest desires of his heart, entreated the cure of his soul, leaving his body to the care of others, as the first miracle of healing is wrought on his soul. In a state of helplessness, when we seek above all things to please God, by

giving him our hearts, he often inspires others with the care of our temporal necessities.

"It is hard to conceive how any man can feel real joy who is at enmity with his Maker. If a man is found rejoicing while Jehovah frowns; while he is under the condemnation of the devil; while any accident, any moment, may precipitate him into hell; surely such joy is rather the frantic ravings of a maniac, than the substantial blessedness of real joy: It is joy without thought; and what intelligent being can covet that? It is, therefore, a principle, evident to demonstration, that, to be happy, we must be forgiven; that reconciliation with God must constitute the base of all real joy. And it is not easy to imagine how misery can obtain a place in the heart of that man who has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—BROMLEY.

The scribes were the *literati* of that time; and their learning, because not used in dependence on God, rendered them proud, envious, and obstinate. Unsanctified knowledge has still the same effect; that light serves only to blind, and lead men out of the way, which is not joined with uprightness of heart. The most sacred truths often become an occasion of delusion, where men are under the government of their evil passions.

2. *Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*—If Jesus were not God, he could not forgive sins; and his arrogating this authority, would have been blasphemy against God, in the most proper sense of the word.

3. *Jesus knowing their thoughts*—In telling them what the thoughts of their hearts were, (for they had expressed nothing publicly,) he gave them the fullest proof of his power to forgive sins; because God only can forgive sins, and God only can search and know the heart. Jesus pronounced the man's sins forgiven; and gave the scribes the fullest proof of his power to do so, by telling them what, in the secret of their souls, they thought on the subject.

God sounds the secrets of all hearts; no sin escapes his notice: How senseless, then, is a sinner to think he sins securely when unseen by men! Let us take heed to our hearts, as well as to our conduct; for God searches out and condemns all that does not spring from, and leads not to, himself.

4. *For whether it is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*—Both are equally easy, and equally difficult; for both require unlimited power to produce them; and every thing is equally easy to that power which is unlimited. A universe can be as easily produced by a single act of the divine will, as the smallest elementary part of matter.

5. *But that ye may know, &c.*—External miracles are the proofs of internal ones. Three miracles are wrought in this case. (I mean by miracle, something produced or known that no power is capable of but that which is omnipotent, and no knowledge adequate to but that which is omniscient.) The miracles are these: (1.) The remission of the poor man's sins. (2.) The discernment of the secret thoughts of the scribes. (3.) The restoring of the paralytic, in an instant, to perfect soundness. Thus, one miracle becomes the proof and establishment of another. Never was a clearer proof of omnipotent energy and mercy brought under the senses of man. Here is an absolutely perfect miracle wrought; and here are absolute, incontestable proofs that the miracle was wrought; and the conclusion is the fullest demonstration of the Divinity of the ever-blessed Jesus.

6. *Arise, take up thy bed*—Being enabled to obey this command, was the public proof that the man was made whole. Such a circumstance should not pass without improvement. A man gives proof of his conversion from sin to God, who imitates this paralytic person. He who does not rise and stand upright, but either continues grovelling on the earth, or falls back as soon as he is got up, is not yet cured of his spiritual palsy. When we see a penitent enabled to rejoice in hope of God's glory, and to walk in the way of his commandments, he affords us all the proof which we can reasonably require, that his conversion is real; the proof sufficient to satisfy himself is the witness of the Holy Spirit in his own heart. But this is a matter of which those who are without cannot judge; they must form their opinion from his conduct, and judge of the tree by its fruits.

That which to the doctors of the law, the worldly-wise, and prudent, is a matter of scandal, is, to the humble, an occasion

of glorifying the Most High. Divine things make a deeper impression on the hearts of the simple multitude than on those of the doctors; who, puffed up with a sense of their own wisdom, refuse to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." The conversion of one rebellious soul is a greater miracle, and more to be admired, than all that can be wrought on inanimate creatures. He who sees a sinner converted from the error of his ways, sees a miracle wrought by eternal power and goodness. May such miracles be multiplied!

7. *Took up the bed*—The words of Prosper on this place are worthy of notice:—"What is sin but a deplorable fall, a grovelling on the earth, a repose in the creature, often followed by an universal palsy of the soul; namely, an utter inability to help itself, to break off its evil habits, to walk in the ways of God, to rise, or to take one good step towards him? Grace can repair all in a moment: Because it is the almighty will of God, who commands, and does whatever he command."

8. *Departed to his own house, glorifying God*—"It is delightful to read that he went home glorifying God. And when such

mercies are received, the sight of gratitude and consecration to the honour of the Giver, is most refreshing. Well might the man, as he entered into his house with his bed upon his shoulders, exclaim, 'Glory to God for this recovery! I came out of these doors half dead, a living corpse, without motion, without sensation, carried up on the shoulders of others, lifted about, and let down into that room where Jesus was, like a dead man let down into his grave. But, by the sound of that blessed voice of Jesus, I arose as from the dead; new life and health sprang up within my frame, my limbs were girt with might, my spirits flowed joyfully again, and here I return to my house all alive. O blessed consummation of the miracle! the voice that healed for gave me; and I enjoy what is dearer than life or health,—the forgiveness of my sins. O magnify the Lord with me, all my house, and let us glorify his name together! I was brought low, and he helped me. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all my iniquities, healeth all my diseases, who redeemeth my life from destruction, who crowneth me with loving-kindness and tender mercies.'"—BENNETT.

SECTION LIV.—THE CALL OF MATTHEW.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW IX. 9—17; MARK II. 13—22; LUKE V. 27—39.

AND after these things he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed forth from thence, he saw a publican, named Matthew or Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the receipt of custom: And he said unto him, Follow me.¹ And he left all,² rose up, and followed him.³ And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat, behold, a great company of publicans and sinners came, and sat down also with him and his disciples: For there were many, and they followed him. But when their scribes and Pharisees saw him⁴ eat with publicans and sinners, they murmured against his disciples, saying, Why eateth your Master, and why do ye eat and drink, with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he answering said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician; ⁵ but they that are sick. But go ye and learn ⁶ what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: ⁷ For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the

disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John⁸ and of the Pharisees fast often, and make prayers; but thy disciples fast not, but eat and drink? And Jesus said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast *and* mourn, as long as 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. And he spake also a parable unto them: No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment:⁹ Else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old garment, and the rent is made worse, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles:¹⁰ Else the new wine will burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But the new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: For he saith, The old is better.

1. *He said unto him, Follow me*—That is, “Become my disciple.”

“Christ has embodied his laws in his example, and it is indeed a lovely example for us; so pure, so meek, and lowly, so free from every gross and degrading tendency, so bright in all that is noble, and so unequivocal in all that is perfect, impressed on every side with the beauty and grandeur of Divinity,—it is the archetype, the great original, for all moral nature to celebrate and admire.”—J. PARSONS.

2. *And he left all*—Completely abandoning his office, and every thing connected with it. He who wishes to preach the gospel, like the disciples of Christ, must have no earthly entanglement. If he have, his whole labour will be marred by it. The concerns of his own soul, and those of the multitudes to whom he preaches, are sufficient to engross all his attention, and to employ all his powers.

3. *And he rose up, and followed him*—How blessed it is to be obedient to the first call of Christ! How much happiness and glory are lost by delays, though conversion at last may have taken place!

“The disciples of Christ must appear as such; they must not disguise and cloak themselves in secrecy, deprecating the gaze of public acknowledgment, and trembling at the scrutiny of mankind. You

must confess your Master before men; you must come out, and tell what you are, and plant yourselves in the very situations where publicity must attend, and observation must be attracted. It is not necessary to be obtrusive, but it is necessary to be decided; and he must look well to his own soul, who would go on from year to year, and never dare to wear the badge, and pay the vows, of the Lord, in the presence of the people; leaving the open track beaten by the true followers of Christ, and trying to lurk in the solitary obscurity and shelter of unfrequented thickets, and so pass in ambush to heaven.”—J. PARSONS.

4. *The scribes and Pharisees saw him*—He who, like a Pharisee, never felt himself indebted to infinite mercy for his own salvation; is rarely solicitous about the salvation of others. The grace of Christ alone inspires the soul with true benevolence. The self-righteous Pharisees considered it equal to legal defilement to sit in company with tax-gatherers and Heathens. It is certain that those who fear God should not associate, through choice, with the workers of iniquity, and should only be found with them when transacting their secular business requires it, or when they have the prospect of doing good to their souls.

“I do not find where Jesus was hidden to any table and refused. If he sat with

sinners, he converted them; if with converts, he confirmed and instructed them; if with the poor, he fed them; if with the rich, he made them richer in grace. At whose board did he ever sit, and left not his host a gainer?"—BISHOP HALL.

"Often, indeed, have great feasts been made upon the acquisition of wealth and honour: This was the first, and perhaps the only one, ever designedly made in celebration of the renunciation of both, and which expressed the joy of the host at the prospect of becoming the poor disciple of Him who had not where to lay his head. Surely there must have been a strong and pure principle of faith and love in the breasts of these early disciples, who forsook their all, whether fishing boats or nets, or the publican's booth, to follow a Master who held out no worldly inducements."—R. WATSON.

5. *They that be whole need not a physician*—(1.) Jesus Christ represents himself here as the sovereign Physician of souls. (2.) That all stand in need of his healing power. (3.) That men must acknowledge their spiritual maladies, and the need they have of his mercy, in order to be healed by him. (4.) That it is the most inveterate and dangerous disease the soul can be afflicted with, to imagine itself whole, when the sting of death, which is sin, has pierced it through in every part, infusing its poison every where.

6. *But go ye and learn*—Nothing tends more to humble pretenders to devotion than to show them, that they understand neither scripture nor religion, when, relying on external performances, they neglect love to God and man, which is the very soul and substance of true religion. True holiness has ever consisted in faith working by love.

7. *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*—These are remarkable words. We may understand them as implying: (1.) That God prefers an act of mercy, shown to the necessitous, to any act of religious worship to which the person might be called at that time. Both are good; but the former is the greater good, and should be done in preference to the other. (2.) That the whole sacrificial system was intended only to point out the infinite mercy of God to fallen man, in his redemption by the blood

of the new covenant. And, (3.) That we should not rest in the sacrifices, but look for the mercy and salvation prefigured by them.

8. *Why do the disciples of John?*—"The disciples of John intended not to ask the reason, why they themselves fasted often; they being so well satisfied with the reason of that, that they wondered why Christ's disciples did not as they did: This being truly the meaning of their question: 'Since we fast so devoutly, why do not thy disciples do this as well as we?'"—HAMMOND.

9. *No man seweth new cloth on an old garment*—Christian prudence requires that the weak, and newly-converted, should be managed with care and tenderness. To impose such duties and mortifications as are not absolutely necessary to salvation, before God has properly prepared the heart by his grace for them, is a conduct as absurd and ruinous as putting a piece of raw, unscoured cloth on an old garment; it is, in a word, requiring the person to do the work of a man, while as yet he is but a little child. Preachers of the gospel, and especially those who are instruments in God's hand of many conversions, have need of much heavenly wisdom, that they may know to watch over, guide, and advise those who are brought to a sense of their sin and danger. How many auspicious beginnings have been ruined by men's proceeding too hastily, endeavouring to make their own designs take place, and to have the honour of that success themselves which is due only to God.

10. *New wine into old bottles*—It is still the custom, in the eastern countries, to make their bottles of goat-skins; if these happened to be old, and new wine were put into them, the violence of the fermentation must necessarily burst them; and therefore newly-made bottles were employed for the purpose of putting that wine in which had not yet gone through its state of fermentation. The institutes of Christ, and those of the Pharisees, could never be brought to accord: An attempt to combine the two systems would be as absurd as it would be destructive. The old covenant made way for the new, which was its completion and its end; but with that old covenant the new cannot be incorporated.

The following vices are very common to

Pharisees: (1.) They are more busied in censuring the conduct of others than in rectifying their own. (2.) They desire that every one should regulate his piety by theirs; and embrace their particular cus-

toms, and forms of devotion. (3.) They speak of and compare themselves with other people, only that they may have an opportunity of distinguishing and exalting themselves.

SECTION LV.—THE INFIRM MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

A. D. 27.

JOHN V. 1—9.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,¹ having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.² For an angel went down³ at a certain season⁴ into the pool, and troubled the water: Whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.⁵ When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?⁶ The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man,⁷ when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.⁸ And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: And on the same day was the sabbath.⁹

1. *A pool, called Bethesda*—Bethesda signifies, literally, "the house of mercy." It got this name, probably, from the cures which God mercifully performed there. It is likely the porticoes were built for the more convenient reception of the poor and distressed, who came hither to be healed. It does not appear that any person was obliged to pay man for what the mercy of God freely gave. Wicked as the Jewish people were, they never thought of levying a tax on the poor and afflicted, for the cures they received in these healing waters. How is it that a well-regulated state, such as that of Great Britain, can ever permit individuals or corporations to enrich themselves at the expense of God's mercy, manifested in the sanative waters of Bristol, Bath, Buxton, &c.? Should not the accommodations be raised at the expense of the public,

that the poor might enjoy without cost, which they are incapable of defraying, the great blessing which the God of nature has bestowed on such waters? In most of those places there is a profession, that the poor may drink and bathe gratis; but it is little better than a pretence, and the regulations relative to this point render the whole nearly inefficient. However, some good is done.

2. *Waiting for the moving of the water*—Some have imagined that the sanative virtue was communicated to the waters by washing in them the entrails of the beasts which were offered in sacrifice; and that the angel meant no more than merely a man, sent to stir up from the bottom this corrupt sediment, which, being distributed through the water, the pores of the persons who bathed in it were penetrated by this

matter, and his disorder repelled! But this is a miserable shift to get rid of the power and goodness of God; built on the merest conjectures, self-contradictory, and every way as unlikely as it is insupportable. It has never yet been satisfactorily proved that the sacrifices were ever washed; and, could even this be proved, who can show that they were washed in the pool of Bethesda? These waters healed a man, in a moment, of whatsoever disease he had. Now, there is no one cause under heaven that can do this. Had only one kind of disorders been cured here, there might have been some countenance for this deistical conjecture: But this is not the case; and we are obliged to believe the relation just as it stands, and thus acknowledge the sovereign power and mercy of God, or take the desperate flight of an infidel, and thus get rid of the passage altogether.

3. *An angel went down*—Those who feel little or none of the work of God in their own hearts are not willing to allow that he works in others. Many deny the influences of God's Spirit, merely because they never felt them. This is to make any man's experience the rule by which the whole word of God is to be interpreted; and consequently to leave no more divinity in the Bible than is found in the heart of him who professes to explain it.

4. *Certain season*—This probably refers to the time of the feast, during which only this miraculous virtue lasted. It is not likely that the angel appeared to the people; his descent might be only known by the ebullition caused in the waters. Was not the whole a type of Christ? He is the true Bethesda, or house of mercy, the fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness; unto which all the diseased may come, and find health and life eternal.

5. *Had an infirmity thirty and eight years*—His case was deplorable; he was not able to go into the pool himself, and he had no one to help him; so that poverty and disease were here connected. The length of the time he had been afflicted makes the miracle of his cure the greater. There could have been no collusion in this case; as his affliction had lasted thirty-eight years, it must have been known to multitudes; therefore he could not be a

person prepared for the occasion. All Christ's miracles have been wrought in such a way, and on such persons and occasions, as absolutely to preclude all possibility of the suspicion of imposture.

6. *Will thou be made whole?*—Christ, by asking this question, designed to excite in this person faith, hope, and a greater desire of being healed. He wished him to reflect on his miserable state, that he might be the better prepared to receive a cure, and to value it when it came. Addressees of this kind are always proper from the preachers of the gospel, that the hearts as well of hardened as of desponding sinners may be stirred up to desire and expect salvation. "Do you wish to be healed? Do you know that you are under the power of a most inveterate and dangerous disease? If so, there is a remedy; have immediate recourse to the Physician." Questions of this kind are frequently asked in the secret of our souls, by the inspirations of God's Spirit. Happy those who pay attention to them, and give right answers.

7. *Sir, I have no man*—Reader, be thankful to God for health and outward comforts. When long affliction has been allied to deep poverty, how deplorable is the state!

8. *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk*—Jesus speaks here as God. He speaks in no name but his own, and with an authority which belongs to God alone. And what is the consequence? The man became whole immediately; and this sudden restoration to health and strength was an incontestable proof of the omnipotence of Christ. It has been remarked, that our Lord, after having performed a miracle, was accustomed to connect some circumstance with it, which attested its truth. After the miracle of the five loaves, he ordered the fragments to be collected, which were more in quantity than the loaves themselves, though several thousands had been fed. When he changed the water into wine, he ordered some to be taken first to the steward of the feast, that he might taste and bear testimony to its genuineness and excellency. When he cured the lepers, he commanded them to show themselves to the priests, whose business it was to judge of the cure. So here, he judged it necessary, after having cured this infirm man, to order him, not only to

arise, but to take up his bed, and walk, which sufficiently attested the miracle which he had wrought. God's work is ever known by its excellence and good effects.

9. *The same day was the sabbath*—“But why did our Lord command this man to carry his bed on the sabbath, as the law prohibited all servile work, and especially the carrying of burthens?” To this it may be answered, (1.) The man was a poor man; and if he had left his bed, he might have lost it; and he could not have conveniently watched it till the next morning. (2.) Christ showed by this, that he was Lord of the

sabbath. (3.) This was not contrary to the spirit of the law: The sabbath was made to honour God in, and this was a public monument of his power and goodness. (4.) It was consistent with the wisdom of Christ to do his miracles so that they might be seen and known by a multitude of people, and especially in Jerusalem, which was the capital of the country, and the centre of the Jewish religion; and this very circumstance of the healed man carrying his bed on the sabbath day must call the attention of many to this matter, and cause the miracle to be more generally known.

SECTION LVI.—THE JEWS CAVIL, AND SEEK TO KILL CHRIST.

A. D. 27.

JOHN V. 10—16.

THE JEWS therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: It is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed. He answered them, He that made me whole,¹ the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: For Jesus had conveyed himself away,² a multitude being in *that* place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple,³ and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.⁴ The man departed, and told the Jews⁵ that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him,⁶ because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

1. *He that made me whole, &c.*—The poor man reasoned conclusively:—“He who could work such a miracle must be at least the best of men: Now a good man will neither do evil himself, nor command others to do it: But he who cured me ordered me to carry my bed; therefore, there can be no evil in it.”

2. *Jesus had conveyed himself away*—Or, “had withdrawn himself.” And this he might easily do, as there was a crowd in the place. Some think the words indicate, that Jesus withdrew on seeing a multitude in the place, that is, raising a tumult, because of the man's carrying his bed. He had not yet finished his work, and

would not expose himself to the envy and malice of the Jewish rulers.

3. *Jesus findeth him in the temple*—The man being conscious that it was through the mercy of God that he was restored, (though he did not as yet know distinctly who Christ was,) went to the temple to return thanks to God for his cure. Whether this was on the same day, or some other, does not distinctly appear: It was probably the same day, after he had carried home his couch. How many, when they are made well, forget the hand that has healed them; and, instead of gratitude and obedience to God, use their renewed health and strength in the service of sin!

Those who make this use of God's mercies may consider their restoration as a respite only from perdition.

4. *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*—Our Lord, intending to discover to this man who he was, gave him two proofs of the perfection of his knowledge: (1.) He showed him that he knew the secret of the past, "Sin no more:" Thereby intimating that his former sins were the cause of his long affliction. (2.) He showed him that he knew the future, "Lest a worse thing come unto thee:" If thy iniquity be repeated, thy punishment will be increased.

5. *The man departed, and told the Jews*—He did not say it was Jesus who had ordered him to carry his bed, but it was Jesus who had cured him; and he left them to draw the inference, namely, that this Jesus must be the miraculous power of God.

6. *And sought to slay him*—For what cause did these persons seek to destroy our Lord? Because he had healed a poor man, who had been diseased thirty-eight years, and ordered him to carry home the couch on which he lay! How implacable must their malice have been! The spirit of religious persecution has always been

the most fell and dangerous of all on this side perdition. Every other disposition appears to have its moderator; but this is wholly abandoned to the guidance of satan, and has for its objects the men who know the truth, and who live to the glory of their God, and for the benefit of mankind. How strange that such should ever be objects of malice and hatred! But the satanic nature in fallen man is ever opposed to whatever comes from God.

"One might have expected that when he had published the name of his Benefactor, crowds would have thronged about Jesus, to have heard the words of his mouth, and to have received the blessings of the gospel. Instead of this they surround him with an hostile intent; they even conspire against his life, and for an imagined transgression in point of ceremony would have put out this Light of Israel. Let us not wonder, then, if our 'good be evil spoken of;' if even candour, benevolence, and usefulness do not disarm the enmity of those who have been taught to prefer sacrifice to mercy; and who, disrelishing the genuine gospel, naturally seek to slander the professors, but especially the defenders, of it."—WESLEY.

SECTION LVII.—CHRIST'S VINDICATION OF THE MIRACLE.

A. D. 27.

JOHN V. 17—30.

BUT Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.¹ Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.² Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself,³ but what he seeth the Father do: For what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son⁴ likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: And he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead,⁵ and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.⁶ For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all *men* should honour the Son,⁷ even as they honour the

Father. He that honoureth not the Son⁸ honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word,⁹ and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.¹⁰ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice¹¹ of the Son of God: And they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this: ¹² For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: ¹³ As I hear, I judge: And my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will,¹⁴ but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

1. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*—God created the world in six days: On the seventh he rested from all creating acts, and set it apart to be an everlasting memorial of his work. But, though he rested from creating, he never ceased from preserving and governing that which he had formed: In this respect he can keep no sabbaths; for nothing can continue to exist, or answer the end proposed by the divine wisdom and goodness, without the continual energy of God. So "I work;" I am constantly employed in the same way, governing and supporting all things, comforting the wretched, and saving the lost; and to me, in this respect, there is no sabbath.

2. *Making himself equal with God*—This the Jews understood from the preceding verse; nor did they take a wrong meaning out of our Lord's words; for he plainly stated that, whatever was the Father's work, his was the same; thus showing that He and the Father were one. They had now found out two pretences to take away his life: One was, that he had broken the sabbath;—dissolved, as they pretended, the obligation of keeping it holy. The other was, that he was guilty of blasphemy, in making himself equal to God: For both which crimes a man, according to the law, must suffer death.

3. *The Son can do nothing of himself*

—Because of his inseparable union with the Father; nor can the Father do any thing of himself, because of his infinite unity with the Son.

4. *What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son*—God does nothing but what Christ does. What God does is the work of God, and proper to no creature. Jesus does whatsoever God does, and therefore is no created being. The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do. Now, any intelligent creature may do what God cannot do: He may err; he may sin. If Jesus can do nothing but what God does, then he is no creature; he can neither sin, nor err, nor act imperfectly. The conclusion from our Lord's argument is, "If I have broken the sabbath, so has God also; for I can do nothing but what I see him doing. He is ever governing and preserving; I am ever employed in saving."

5. *As the Father raiseth up the dead*—This he did in the case of the widow's son at Sarepta, by the ministry of the prophet Elijah; and again, in the case of the Shunamite's son, by the ministry of the prophet Elisha.

6. *The Son quickeneth whom he will*—He raiseth from death to life whomsoever he pleases. So he did; for he raised the ruler's daughter; the widow's son, at Nain; and Lazarus, at Bethany.

"Whom he will:" Here our Lord points out his sovereign power and independence: He gives life according to his own will; not being obliged to supplicate for the power by which it was done, as the prophets did; his own will being absolute and sufficient in every case.

7. *That all men should honour the Son, &c.*—If, then, the Son is to be honoured, even as the Father is honoured, then the Son must be God, as receiving that worship which belongs to God alone. To worship any creature is idolatry. Christ is to be honoured even as the Father is honoured; therefore Christ is not a creature; and, if not a creature, consequently the Creator.

8. *He that honoureth not the Son*—God will not receive that man's adoration who refuses to honour Jesus, even as he honours him.

9. *He that heareth my word*—My doctrine. "And believeth on him that sent me:" He who credits my divine mission, that I am come to give light and life to the world by my doctrine and death. "Hath eternal life:" The seed of this life is sown in his heart the moment he believes. "And shall not come into condemnation:" "Into judgment;" that which will speedily come on this unbelieving race; and that which shall overwhelm the wicked in the great day.

10. *But is passed from death unto life*—Has "changed his country," or "place of abode." Death is the country where every Christless soul lives. The man who knows not God lives a dying life, or a living death; but he who believes in the Son of God passes over from the empire of death, to the empire of life. Reader, thou wast born in death! Hast thou yet changed the place of thy natural residence? Remember, that to live in sin is to live in death; and those who live and die thus shall die eternally.

11. *The dead shall hear the voice*—Three kinds of death are mentioned in the scriptures: Natural, spiritual, and eternal. The first consists in the separation of the body and soul; the second, in the separation of God and the soul; the third, in the separation of body and soul from God in the other world. Answerable to these three kinds of death, there is a three-

fold life: Natural life, which consists in the union of the soul and body; spiritual life, which consists in the union of God and the soul, by faith and love; eternal life, which consists in the communion of the body and soul with God, by holiness, in the realms of bliss.

Of the dead, our Lord says, "The hour is coming, and now is, when they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." The hour is coming, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake at the voice of the Son of Man, and come to judgment; for he giveth life to the dead. Again: The hour is coming, when some of those who have died a natural death shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live again here. It is likely that our Lord had not as yet raised any from the dead; and he refers to those whom he intended to raise. Lastly: The hour now is, when many who are dead in trespasses and sins, shall hear the voice (the word) of the Son of God, believe, and receive spiritual life through him.

12. *Marvel not at this*—In this verse he anticipates an objection; as if they had said, "This cannot be; thou art a man; thou wast born among us." Our Lord answers: "Do not marvel at this, because I am a man; for greater things than these shall be done by me. He who now addresses you, though disguised under the form of a man, shall appear in the great day to be the Judge of quick and dead; by his almighty power, he shall raise all the dead; and, by his unerring wisdom and justice, shall adjudge the wicked to hell, and the righteous to heaven."

"Behold the dead press forth from their graves, following each other in close procession. The earth seems quick, and the sea gives up its dead. Mark the beauty, the boldness, and the gladness of some, springing up to honour; but the ghastly countenances, the trembling, and the despair of others, arising to shame and everlasting contempt. See how amazed and terrified they look! With what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! Fain would they fly, but cannot. Impelled by a force strong as necessity, they hasten to the place of judgment. As they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar strikes new terror; they come on in the deepest silence,

and gather round the throne by thousands of thousands."—MACKNIGHT.

13. *I can of mine own self do nothing*—Because of my intimate union with the Father. Nor can the Father do any thing of himself, because of his infinite unity with the Son.

14. *I seek not mine own will*—I do not, I cannot, attempt to do any thing without God. This, that is, the Son of Man, the human nature which is the temple of my Divinity, is perfectly subject to the Deity that dwells in it. In this respect our blessed Lord is the perfect pattern of all his followers. In every thing their wills should

submit to the will of their heavenly Father. Nothing is more common than to hear people say, "I will do it because I choose." He who has no better reason to give for his conduct than his own will, shall, in the end, have the same reason to give for his eternal destruction: "I followed my own will, in opposition to the will of God, and now I am plunged in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Reader, God hath sent thee also to do his will: His will is, that thou shouldst abandon thy sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus. Hast thou yet done it?

SECTION LVIII.—CHRIST ASSERTS THE DIGNITY OF HIS OFFICE.

A. D. 27.

JOHN V. 31—39.

IF I bear witness¹ of myself, my witness is not true. There is another² that beareth witness of me; and I know³ that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John,⁴ and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: But these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light:⁵ And ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness⁶ than *that* of John: For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you:⁷ For whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures;⁸ for in them ye think ye have eternal life: And they are they which testify of me.

1. *If I bear witness*—If I had no proof to bring of my being the Messiah, and equal to God, common sense would direct you to reject my testimony; but the mighty power of God, by which I work my miracles, sufficiently attests that my pretensions are well founded.

2. *There is another*—God the Father, who, by his Spirit in your prophets, described my person, office, and miracles. You read these scriptures, and you cannot help seeing that they testify of me: No person ever did answer the description

there given, but myself; and I answer to that description in the fullest sense of the word.

3. *And I know*—Ye believe the scriptures to be of God, and that he cannot lie; and yet ye will not believe in me, though these scriptures have so clearly foretold and described me! It is not one of the least evils attending unbelief, that it acts not only in opposition to God, but it also acts inconsistently with itself. It receives the scriptures in bulk, and acknowledges them to have come through divine inspira-

tion; and yet believes no part separately. With it the whole is true, but no part is true! The very unreasonableness of this conduct shows the principle to have come from beneath, were there no other evidences against it.

4. *Ye sent unto John*.—I am not without human testimony of the most respectable kind: "Ye sent to John, and he bare witness." There are several circumstances in John's character which render his testimony unexceptionable. (1.) He is consulted by the very enemies of Christ, as a very holy and extraordinary man. (2.) He is perfectly free from all self-interest, having declined making the least advantage by his own reputation. (3.) He is sincere, undaunted, and so averse from all kinds of flattery, that he reproves Herod at the hazard of his liberty and life. (4.) He was so far from being solicited by Christ to give his testimony, that he had not even seen him when he gave it.

5. *He was a burning and a shining light*.—"He was a burning and a shining lamp." He was not the light of the world, that is, the sun; but he was a lamp, to give a clear and steady light till the sun should arise. It is supposed that John had been cast into prison about four months before this time. As his light continued no longer to shine, our Lord says, "He was." The expression of "lamp," our Lord took from the ordinary custom of the Jews, who termed their eminent doctors "the lamps of Israel." A lighted candle is a proper emblem of a minister of God; and, "In serving others, I myself destroy,"—a proper motto. There are few who preach the gospel faithfully that do not lose their lives by it. "Burning" may refer to the zeal with which John executed his message; and "shining" may refer to the clearness of the testimony which he bore concerning Christ. Only to shine, is but vanity; and to burn without shining, will never edify the church of God. Some shine, and some burn, but few both shine and burn; and many there are who are denominated pastors, who neither shine nor burn. He who wishes to save souls must both burn and shine; the clear light of the knowledge of the sacred records

must fill his understanding; and the holy flame of loving zeal must occupy his heart. Zeal without knowledge is continually blundering; and knowledge without zeal makes no converts to Christ.

6. *But I have greater witness*.—However decisive the judgment of such a man as John may be, who was the lamp of Israel, a miracle of grace, filled with the spirit of Elijah, and more than any prophet, because he pointed out, not the Messiah who was to come, but the Messiah who was already come; nevertheless, I am not obliged to depend on his testimony alone; for I have a greater one, that of Him whom you acknowledge to be your God. And how do I prove that this God bears testimony to me? By my works: These miracles, which attest my mission, and prove by themselves that nothing less than unlimited power and boundless love could ever produce them. By my word only, I have perfectly and instantly healed a man who was diseased thirty and eight years. Ye see the miracle; the man is before you whole and sound. Why, then, do ye not believe in my mission, that ye may embrace my doctrine, and be saved?

7. *Ye have not his word abiding in you*.—Though ye believe the scriptures to be of God, yet ye do not let them take hold of your hearts; his word is in your mouth, but not in your mind. What a miserable lot! to read the scriptures as the true sayings of God, and yet to get no salvation from them! "Thy word," says David, "have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." This, these Jews had not done. Reader, hast thou?

8. *Search the scriptures*.—"Search; that is, "shake" and "sift" them, as the word also signifies: Search narrowly, till the true force and meaning of every sentence, yea, of every word and syllable, nay, of every letter and *god* therein, be known and understood. Confer place with place; the scope of one place with that of another; things going before with things coming after: Compare word with word, letter with letter, and search the whole thoroughly.

SECTION LIX.—CHRIST REPROVES THE JEWS.

A. D. 27.

JOHN V. 40—47.

AND ye will not come to me,¹ that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men.² But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.³ I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another,⁴ and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you⁵ to the Father: There is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: For he wrote of me.⁶ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?⁷

1. *And ye will not come to me*—Though ye thus search the scriptures, in hopes of finding the Messiah and eternal life in them, yet “ye will not come unto me,” believe in me, and be my disciples, though so clearly pointed out by them, that ye may have that eternal life which can only come through me.

2. *I receive not honour from men*—I do not stand in need of you or your testimony. I act neither through self-interest nor vanity. Your salvation can add nothing to me, nor can your destruction injure me. I speak only through my love for your souls, that ye may be saved.

3. *But I know you, that ye have not, &c.*—Do not say that you oppose me through zeal for God's honour, and love for his name, because I make myself equal to him. No; this is not the case. I know the dispositions of your souls; and I know ye have neither love for his name, nor zeal for his glory; incorrigible ignorance and malicious jealousy actuate your hearts. Ye read the scriptures, but ye do not enter into their meaning. Had you been as diligent to find out the truth as you have been to find out allegories, false glosses, and something to countenance you in your crimes, you would have known that the Messiah, who is equal with God, must be the Son of Man also, and the inheritor of David's throne; and that the very works which I do are those which the prophets have foretold the Messiah should perform.

4. *How can ye believe which receive honour, &c.*—The grand obstacle to the

salvation of the scribes and Pharisees was their pride, vanity, and self-love. They lived on each other's praise. If they had acknowledged Christ as the only Teacher, they must have given up the good opinion of the multitude; and they chose rather to lose their souls than to forfeit their reputation among men. This is the ruin of millions: They would be religious, if religion and worldly honour were connected; but as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and their hearts and souls are wedded to the earth, they will not accept the salvation which is offered to them on these terms: “Deny thyself; take up thy cross, and follow me.” It is no wonder that we never find persons making any progress in religion who mix with the world, and, in any respect, regulate their conduct by its anti-Christian customs, maxims, and fashions.

5. *Do not think that I will accuse you*—You have accused me of a breach of the sabbath; which accusation I have demonstrated to be false. I could, in return, accuse you, and substantiate the accusation with the breach of the whole law; but this I need not do; for Moses, in whom ye trust, accuses you. You read his law, acknowledge you should obey it, and yet break it, both in the letter and in the spirit. This law, therefore, accuses and condemns you. It was a maxim among the Jews, that none could accuse them but Moses; the spirit of which seems to be, that only so pure and enlightened a legislator could find fault with such a noble and excellent people; for, notwithstanding their

abominations, they supposed themselves the most excellent of mankind.

6. *He wrote of me*—For instance, in reciting the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." And in Deut. xviii. 18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth," &c. Besides, Moses pointed out the Messiah in a multitude of symbols and figures, which are found in the history of the patriarchs, the ceremonial laws, and, especially, in the whole sacrificial system: All these were well-defined, though shadowy, representations of the birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Saviour of the world. Add to this, Moses has given you certain marks to distinguish the false from the true prophet, which, if you apply to me, you will find that I am not a false, but a true Prophet, of the most high God.

7. *But if ye believe not his writings, &c.*—If you lay them not to heart; if you draw not those conclusions from them which their very letter, as well as their spirit, authorizes you to draw; "how shall ye believe my words," against which ye have taken up the most ungrounded prejudice? It is no wonder that we find the Jews still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; as they believe not Moses and the prophets in reference to the Messiah, it is no marvel that they reject Christ and the apostles. Till they see and acknowledge, from the law and the prophets, that Christ must have come, they will never believe the gospel. St. Paul says, 2 Cor. iii. 15, that "even until this day, when Moses"—that is, the law—"is read, the veil is upon their hearts; so that they see not to the end of that which is abolished." Nor will this veil be taken away till they turn from worldly gain and atheism (which appears

to be their general system) to the Lord; and then the light of the glory of God shall shine on them in the face—through the mediation and merits—of Jesus Christ.

In all periods of their history, the Jews were both an incredulous and disobedient people: Perhaps it was on this ground that God first chose them to be keepers of his testimonies; for had they not had the most incontrovertible proofs that God did speak, they would neither have credited nor preserved his oracles. Their incredulity is, therefore, no mean proof of the divine authority of the law and the prophets. The apostles, who were all Jews, partook deeply of the same spirit, as various places in the gospel prove; and had not they had the fullest evidence of the Divinity of their Master, they would not have believed, much less have sealed the truth with their blood. Thus their incredulity is a strong proof of the authenticity of the gospel. When a man, through prejudice, bigotry, or malevolence, is determined to disbelieve, both evidence and demonstration are lost upon him; he is incapable of conviction, because he is determined not to yield. This was, this is, the case with the Jews: There are facts before their eyes sufficient to convince and confound them; but they have made a covenant with unbelief, and therefore they continue blind, ignorant, and wicked, obstinately closing their eyes against the light; and thus the wrath of God is coming upon them to the very uttermost. But shall not a rebellious and wicked Christian be judged worthy of more punishment? Certainly; for he professes to believe that truth which is able to make him wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ. Reader, it is an awful thing to trifle with the gospel; the God of it is pure, jealous, and holy. Come unto him, and implore forgiveness of thy past sins, that thou mayest have eternal life.

SECTION LX.—CHRIST'S VINDICATION OF HIS DISCIPLES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 1—8; MARK II. 23—28; LUKE VI. 1—5.

AND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the cornfields; and his disciples were an hungered, and

began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat,¹ rubbing *them* in *their* hands. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, certain of *them* said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath day? They said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do² upon the sabbath day. And Jesus answering them said unto them, Have ye never read so much as this, what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him; how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high-priest, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple.³ But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy,⁴ and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man,⁵ and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath.⁶

1. *Pluck the ears of corn, and to eat*—We may well wonder at the extreme poverty of Christ and his disciples. He was himself present with them, and yet permitted them to lack bread! A man, therefore, is not forsaken of God because he is in want. It is more honourable to suffer the want of all temporal things in fellowship with Christ and his followers, than to have all things in abundance in connexion with the world.

2. *Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do*—Those who know not the spirit and design of the divine law are often superstitious to inhumanity, and indulgent to impiety. An intolerant and censorious spirit in religion is one of the greatest curses a man can well fall under.

3. *In this place is one greater than the temple*—Does not our Lord refer here to Malachi iii. 1? Compare this with Hebrews iii. 3. The Jews esteemed nothing greater than the temple, except that God who was worshipped in it. Christ, by asserting he was "greater than the temple," asserts that he was God; and this he does, in still more direct terms: "The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath," is Institutor and Governor of it.

4. *I will have mercy, &c.*—There are

four ways in which positive laws may cease to oblige: (1.) By the natural law of necessity. (2.) By a particular law, which is superior. (3.) By the law of charity and mercy. (4.) By the dispensation and authority of the lawgiver.

5. *The sabbath was made for man*—That he might have the seventh part of his whole time to devote to the purposes of bodily rest and spiritual exercises. And in these respects it is of infinite use to mankind. Where no sabbath is observed, there disease, poverty, and profligacy generally prevail. Had we no sabbath, we should soon have no religion.

6. *The Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath-day*—The change of the Jewish into the Christian sabbath, called the Lord's day, shows that Christ is not only the Lord, but also the truth and completion, of it. For it seems to have been by an especial providence, that this change has been made and acknowledged all over the Christian world. God ordained the sabbath not only to be a type of that rest which remains for the people of God, but to be also a mean of promoting the welfare of men in general. The ordinances of religion should be regulated according to their end, which is the honour of God, and

the salvation of men. It is the property of the true religion to contain nothing in it but what is beneficial to man. Hereby God plainly shows, that it is neither out of indigence nor interest that he requires men to worship and obey him; but only out of goodness, and to make them happy. God prohibited work on the sabbath-day, lest servants should be oppressed by their masters, that the labouring beasts might have necessary rest, and that men might have a proper opportunity to attend upon his ordinances, and get their souls saved. To the sabbath, under God, we owe much of what is "requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."

"It is not liberty to apply the sabbath to secular purposes, or to spend it in sloth and pleasure. Christ himself devoted it to religion by teaching in the synagogues on the sabbath, and was probably on this occasion travelling from synagogue to syna-

gogue with his disciples, when they, from mere hunger, plucked the ears of corn. Thus he has taught us to apply the leisure of the sabbath to its sacred end, the worship of God, and attendance upon public instruction. Nor is there any instance of his giving the slightest sanction to worldly labour or listless recreation on that sacred day. Works of necessity, such as supplying the demand of hunger, and drawing a beast out of a pit, are the only examples of exception to which he refers for the justification of his own conduct; and works of mercy, such as healing the sick, when actually present before him, are the only instances in which he suffered his own example to be pleaded for any seeming departure from its strict observance; instances which only confirm the sanction of its hallowed character and universal obligation."—R. WATSON.

SECTION LXI.—CHRIST CURES THE WITHERED HAND.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 9—14; MARK III. 1—6; LUKE VI. 6—11.

AND it came to pass also on another sabbath, when he was departed thence, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: And, behold, there was a man whose right hand was withered.¹ And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day: And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?² But they held their peace. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day,³ will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?⁴ Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. And when he had looked round about upon them all with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,⁵ he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand.⁶ And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and were filled with madness; and communed one with

another what they might do to Jesus : And straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him,⁷ how they might destroy him.

1. *A man whose right hand was withered*—Probably through a partial paralysis. The man's hand was withered; but God's mercy had still preserved to him the use of his feet; he uses them to bring him to the public worship of God; and Jesus meets and heals him there. How true is the proverb, "It is never so ill with us, but it might be much worse!"

2. *To do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?*—It was a maxim with the Jews, as it should be with all men, that he who neglected to preserve life when it was in his power, was to be reputed a murderer. Every principle of sound justice requires that he should be considered in this light. But, if this be the case, how many murderers are there against whom there is no law but the law of God!

3. *If it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, &c.*—Self-interest is a very decisive casuist, and removes abundance of scruples in a moment. It is always the first consulted, and the most readily obeyed. It is not sinful to hearken to it, but it must not govern nor determine by itself.

4. *How much then is a man better than a sheep?*—Our Lord's argument is what is called *argumentum ad hominem*; they are taken on their own ground, and confuted on their own maxims and conduct. There are many persons who call themselves Christians, who do more for a beast of burden or pleasure than they do for a man, for whom Christ died! Many spend that on coursers, spaniels, and hounds, of which multitudes of the followers of Christ are destitute: But this also shall come to judgment.

5. *With anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*—By a long resistance to the grace and Spirit of God, their hearts had become callous; they were past feeling. By a long opposition to the light of God, they became dark in their understanding, were blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, and thus were past seeing. By a long continuance in the practice of every evil work, they were cut off from all union with God, the fountain of spiritual life; and becoming dead in trespasses and sins, they were incapable of any resurrection but through a miraculous power of God.

"With anger." What was the anger which our Lord felt? That which proceeded from excessive grief, which was occasioned by their obstinate stupidity and blindness: Therefore it was no uneasy passion, but an excess of generous grief.

"It was an holy indignation, a perfectly right state of heart, and the want of it would have been a sinful defect. It would show a want of filial respect and affection, for a son to hear without emotion his father's character unjustly aspersed. Would it not, then, be a want of due reverence for God, to hear his name blasphemed, without feeling and expressing an indignant disapprobation?"—SCOTT.

6. *Stretch forth thine hand*—The bare command of God is a sufficient reason of obedience. This man might have reasoned thus: "Lord, my hand is withered; how then can I stretch it out? Make it whole first, and afterwards I will do as thou commandest." This may appear reasonable, but in his case it would have been foolishness. At the command of the Lord he made the effort, and, in making it, the cure was effected! Faith disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God. The effort to believe is, often, that faith by which the soul is healed. A little before Jesus Christ had asserted his Godhead; in this verse he proves it. What but the omnipotence of the living God could have, in a moment, restored this withered hand? There could be no collusion here; the man who had a real disease was instantaneously, and therefore miraculously, cured; and the mercy and power of God were both amply manifested in this business. It is worthy of remark, that as the man was healed with a word, without even a touch, the sabbath was unbroken, even according to their most rigid interpretation of the letter of the law.

7. *Took counsel with the Herodians against him*—Nothing sooner leads to utter blindness, and hardness of heart, than envy. There are many who abandon themselves to pleasure-taking and debauchery on the sabbath, who condemn a poor man whom necessity obliges to work on what is termed a holiday, or a national fast.

SECTION LXII.—CHRIST HEALS GREAT MULTITUDES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 15—21; MARK III. 7—12; LUKE VI. 17—19.

BUT when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence¹ with his disciples to the sea: And great multitudes followed him from Galilee, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and *from* beyond Jordan, and he healed them all; ² and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.³ And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. For there went virtue out of him, and healed *them* all. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits were healed. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known: ⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant,⁵ whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; ⁶ neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break,⁷ and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.⁸ And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.⁹

1. *Jesus withdrew himself from thence*—It is the part of prudence and Christian charity, not to provoke, if possible, the blind and the hardened; and to take from them the occasion of sin. A man of God is not afraid of persecution; but, as his aim is only to do good, by proclaiming, every where, the grace of the Lord Jesus, he departs from any place when he finds the obstacles to the accomplishment of his end are, humanly speaking, invincible, and that he cannot do good without being the means of much evil. Yield to the stream when you cannot stem it.

2. *Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them*—The rejection of the gospel in one place has often been the means of sending it to, and establishing it in, another. Jesus "healed all them that followed him;" that is, all who had need of healing, and who desired to be healed;

for thus the passage must be understood. And is he not still the same? No soul shall ever implore his healing power in vain; but let it be remembered, that only those who follow Christ, and apply to him, are healed of their spiritual maladies.

3. *When they had heard what great things he did, came unto him*—So, if Christ be persecuted and abandoned by the wicked, there are a multitude of pious souls who earnestly seek and follow him. He who labours for God will always find more than he loses, in the midst of all his contradictions and persecutions.

4. *Charged them that they should not make him known*—Jesus Christ, as God, could have easily concealed himself, but he chooses to do it as man, and to use no other than human means, as these were quite sufficient for the purpose, to teach us not

to neglect them in our necessity. Indeed, he always used his power less on his own account, than on that of men.

5. *Behold my servant*—This title was given to our blessed Lord in several prophecies. See Isaiah xlii. 1 ; liii. 2. Christ assumes it, Psalm xl. 7—9. God required an acceptable and perfect service from man ; but man, being sinful, could not perform it. Jesus, taking upon him the nature of man, fully performed the whole will of God, and communicates grace to all his followers, to enable them perfectly to love and worthily to magnify their Maker.

6. *He shall not strive, nor cry* — The Spirit of Christ is not a spirit of contention, murmuring, clamour, or litigiousness. He who loves these does not belong to him. Christ therefore fulfilled a prophecy by withdrawing from this place, on account of the rage of the Pharisees.

7. *A bruised reed shall he not break*—Some suppose the Jewish state, as to ecclesiastical matters, is here intended ; the prophecy declaring that Christ would not destroy it, but leave it to expire of itself, as it already contained the principles of its own destruction. Others have considered it as implying that great tenderness with which the blessed Jesus should treat the weak and the ignorant, whose good desires must not be stifled, but encouraged. The bruised reed may recover itself, if permitted to vegetate under the genial influences of heaven ; and the life and light of the expiring lamp may be supported by the addition of fresh oil. Jesus therefore quenches not faint desires after salvation, even in the worst and most undeserving of men ; for even such desires may lead to the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

8. *Judgment unto victory*—By “judgment,” understand the gospel, and by

“victory,” its complete triumph over Jewish opposition and Gentile impiety. He will continue by these mild and gentle means to work till the whole world is Christianized, and the universe filled with his glory.

“A dignified humility, an entire deadness to human applause, and the meekest submission to his whole appointed course of reproach and calumny, are among the most obvious traits of his character as a public Teacher. Bruised spirits, bent down by a sense of sin, or a weight of bodily suffering, and often both, were the objects of his special compassion ; and innumerable were the monuments which he left, throughout the land, of his prompt and effectual pity. Nor with less sympathy did he regard the ignorance of a neglected people, in danger of having the last rays of truth extinguished in their minds from the want of proper instructors. In every docile and inquiring mind he trimmed the lamp of the understanding ; and amidst all the fogs and vapours of prejudices, which rendered the communication of truth difficult in itself, and trying to the patience of the teacher, as the kindling of a lamp where the wick is faulty and the atmosphere foul, he kindled that light which ‘guided their feet into the way of peace,’ and rendered many of them the guides of their nation and the world into the way of salvation.”—R. WATSON.

9. *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust*—Jesus Christ is the sole hope and trust of mankind ; to trust and hope in his name, Jesus, is to expect salvation and all things necessary from him alone ; to despise, comparatively, all earthly promises ; to esteem, love and desire heavenly things only ; and to bear with patience and tranquillity all the losses and evils of this life, upon the prospect and hope of that felicity which he has purchased for us.

SECTION LXIII.—CHRIST CHOOSES TWELVE DISCIPLES.

A. D. 27.

MARK III. 13—19 ; LUKE VI. 12—19.

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

it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples, whom he would : And they came unto him : And of them he chose *and* ordained twelve,¹ whom also he named apostles ; that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils :² And Simon he 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 :³ And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, *or* Judas, *the brother* of James, and Simon the Canaanite, called Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor, which also betrayed him. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain,⁴ and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases ; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits : And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him : For there went virtue out of him, and healed *them* all.

1. *He chose twelve*.—"He chose twelve out of them." Our Lord, at this time, had several disciples, persons who were converted to God under his ministry ; and out of these converts he chose twelve, whom he appointed to the work of the ministry, and called them "apostles," that is, persons sent or commissioned by himself, to preach that gospel to others by which they had themselves been saved. These were favoured with extraordinary success : (1.) Because they were brought to the knowledge of God themselves. (2.) Because they received their commission from the great Head of the church. And, (3.) Because, as he had sent them, he continued to accompany their preaching with the power of his Spirit. These three things always unite in the character of a genuine apostle.

2. *To have power to heal, and to cast out devils*.—The business of a minister of Christ is, (1.) To preach the gospel. (2.) To be the physician of souls. And, (3.) To wage war with the devil, and destroy his kingdom.

"All else is branded as intrusion, is attended with danger, is consummated with ruin ; nor can any combination of qualifications, majesty of understanding, elevation of fancy, extent of knowledge, brilliance of

rhetoric, supply or atone for the lack of those credentials which are stamped and sealed with the authority of heaven. One influence and one spirit must pervade all, from highest to lowest, from first to last ; and then it is we can advance the claim : 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.'"—J. PARSONS.

3. *Sons of thunder*.—Some think that the reason why our Lord gave this appellation to the sons of Zebedee was, their desire to bring fire down from heaven, that is, a storm of thunder and lightning, to overturn and consume a certain Samaritan village, the inhabitants of which would not receive their Master.

"The wisdom of our Lord's conduct was eminently displayed in the choice of his apostles : They were generally chosen from the inferior ranks of life, and most of them were fishermen. If the disciples of Christ had been men of rank and distinction, of wealth or eminence ; if they had been esteemed for their knowledge, or literature, or political influence ; these means might, more or less, have been employed for promoting the kingdom of the Messiah, which nearly all the Jews imagined would be of an earthly nature. The success of the gospel, too, would have been attributed, by

its enemies at least, to mere human exertions."—TOWNSEND.

4. *And stood in the plain*—In Matthew v. 1, which is supposed to be the parallel place, our Lord is represented as delivering this sermon "on the mountain;" and this has induced some to think that the sermon mentioned here by Luke, though the same in substance with that in Matthew, was delivered in a different place, and at another time; but Matthew's saying that Jesus was "sat down" after he had gone up to the mountain, and Luke's saying that he "stood on the plain" when he healed the sick, before the discourse, are no inconsistencies.

The whole picture is striking: Jesus ascends a mountain, employs the night in prayer, and, having thus solemnly invoked the divine blessing, authoritatively separates the twelve apostles from the mass of his disciples; he then descends, and heals in the plain all the diseased among a great multitude, collected from various parts by the fame of his miraculous power. Having thus created attention, he likewise satisfies the desire of the people to hear his doctrine; and retiring first to the mountain whence he came, that his attentive hearers might follow him, and might better arrange themselves before him.

SECTION LXIV.—CHRIST INSTRUCTS THE MULTITUDES.

A. D. 27.

LUKE VI. 20—36.

AND he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed *be ye* poor: For your's is the kingdom of God. Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: For ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: For ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: For, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: For in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich!¹ for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not *to take thy* coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again.² And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.³ And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive,⁴ what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

But love ye your enemies,⁵ and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again ; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest : For he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful,⁶ as your Father also is merciful.

1. *But woe unto you that are rich*—The Pharisees, who were laden with the spoils of the people, which they received in gifts, &c. These three verses are not found in the sermon, as recorded by Matthew. They seem to be spoken chiefly to the scribes and Pharisees, who, in order to be pleasing to all, spoke to every one what he liked best ; and by finesse, flattery, and lies, found out the method of gaining and keeping the good opinion of the multitude.

2. *Ask them not again*—Or, “Do not beg them off.” This probably refers to the way in which the tax-gatherers and Roman soldiers used to spoil the people. “When such harpies as these come upon your goods, suffer the injury quietly, leaving yourselves in the hand of God, rather than attempt even to beg off what belongs to you, lest on their part they be provoked to seize or spoil more, and lest you be irritated to sue them at law, which is totally opposite to the spirit and letter of the gospel ; or to speak bad words, or indulge wrong tempers, which would wound the spirit of love and mercy.” From the 27th to the 30th verse our blessed Lord gives us directions how to treat our enemies. (1.) Wish them well. (2.) Do them good. (3.) Speak as well of them as possible. (4.) Be an instrument of procuring them good from others : Use your influence in their behalf. (5.) Suffer patiently from them contempt and ill treatment. (6.) Give up your goods rather than lose your meekness and charity towards them. The retaliation of those who hearken not to their own passion, but to Christ, consists in doing more good than they receive evil. Ever since our blessed Saviour suffered the Jews to take away his life, it is by his patience that we must regulate our own.

3. *For sinners also love those that love them*—The religion of Christ not only corrects the errors and reforms the disorders of the fallen nature of man, but raises it even above itself : It brings it near to God ; and, by universal love, leads it to frame its conduct according to that of the Sove-

reign Being. “A man should tremble who finds nothing in his life besides the external part of religion, but what may be found in the life of a Turk or a Heathen.” The gospel of the grace of God purifies and renews the heart, causing it to resemble that Christ through whom the grace came.

4. *Of whom ye hope to receive*—Or, “Whom ye expect to return it.” “To make our neighbour purchase, in any way, the assistance which we give him, is to profit by his misery ; and, by laying him under obligations which we expect him in some way or other to discharge, we increase his wretchedness under the pretence of relieving it.”

5. *Love ye your enemies*—This is the most sublime precept ever delivered to man : A false religion durst not give a precept of this nature, because, without supernatural influence, it must be for ever impracticable. In these words of our blessed Lord we see the tenderness, sincerity, extent, disinterestedness, pattern, and issue of the love of God dwelling in man : A religion which has for its foundation the union of God and man in the same person, and the death of this August Being for his enemies ; which consists on earth in a reconciliation of the Creator with his creatures, and which is to subsist in heaven only in the union of the members with the Head : Could such a religion as this ever tolerate hatred in the soul of man, even to his most inveterate foe ?

6. *Be ye therefore merciful*—As God is ever disposed to give all necessary help and support to those who are miserable, so his followers, being influenced by the same spirit, are easy to be entreated, and are at all times ready to contribute to the uttermost of their power to relieve or remove the miseries of the distressed. A merciful or compassionate man easily forgets injuries ; pardons them without being solicited ; and does not permit repeated returns of ingratitude to deter him from doing good, even to the unthankful and the unholly.

SECTION LXV.—CHRIST CONTINUES HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

A.D. 27.

LUKE VI. 37—49.

JUDGE not,¹ and ye shall not be judged : Condemn not,² and ye shall not be condemned : Forgive,³ and ye shall be forgiven : Give, and it shall be given⁴ unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind ?⁵ shall they not both fall into the ditch ? The disciple is not above his master : But every one that is perfect⁶ shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit ; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil : For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord,⁷ and do not the things which I say ? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like : He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock : And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it : For it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth ; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell ; and the ruin of that house was great.

1. *Judge not*—“How great is the goodness of God, in being so willing to put our judgment into our own hands, as to engage himself not to enter into judgment with us, provided we do not usurp the right which belongs solely to him in reference to others !”

2. *Condemn not*—“Mercy will ever in-

cline us not to condemn those unmercifully whose faults are certain and visible ; to lessen, conceal, and excuse them as much as we can without prejudice to truth and justice ; and to be far from aggravating, divulging, or even desiring them to be punished.”

3. *Forgive*—The mercy and compassion

which God recommends extend to the forgiving of all the injuries we have received or can receive. To imitate in this the mercy of God, is not a mere counsel; since it is proposed as a necessary mean in order to receive mercy. What man has to forgive in man is almost nothing; man's debt to God is infinite. And who acts in this matter as if he wished to receive mercy at the hand of God? The spirit of revenge is equally destitute of faith and reason.

4. *Give, and it shall be given*—“Christian charity will make no difficulty in giving that which Eternal Truth promises to restore. Let us give, neither out of mere human generosity, nor out of vanity, nor from interest, but for the sake of God, if we would have him place it to account. There is no such thing as true, unmixed generosity but in God only; because there is none but him who receives no advantage from his gifts, and because he engages himself to pay these debts of his creatures with an excessive interest. So great is the goodness of God, that, when he might have absolutely commanded us to give to our neighbour, he vouchsafes to invite us to this duty by the prospect of a reward, and to impute that to us as a desert, which he has a right to exact of us by the title of his sovereignty over our persons and estates.”

Men live in such a state of social union as renders mutual help necessary; and as self-interest, pride, and other corrupt passions mingle themselves ordinarily in their commerce, they cannot fail of offending one another. In civil society men must, in order to taste a little tranquillity, resolve to bear something from their neighbours; they must suffer, pardon, and give up many things; without doing which, they must live in such a state of continual agitation as will render life itself insupportable. Without this giving and forgiving spirit, there will be nothing in civil society, and even in Christian congregations, but divisions, evil surmisings, injurious discourses, outrages, anger, vengeance, and, in a word, a total dissolution of the mystical body of Christ.

Thus our interest in both worlds calls loudly upon us to give and to forgive.

5. *Can the blind lead the blind?*—This appears to have been a general proverb, and to signify that a man cannot teach what he does not understand. This is strictly true in spiritual matters: A man who is not illuminated from above is utterly incapable of judging concerning spiritual things, and wholly unfit to be a guide to others. Is it possible that a person who is enveloped with the thickest darkness should dare either to judge of the state of others, or attempt to lead them in that path of which he is totally ignorant? If he do, must not his judgment be rashness, and his teaching folly? And does he not endanger his own soul, and run the risk of falling into the ditch of perdition himself, together with the unhappy objects of his religious instruction?

6. *Every one that is perfect*—Every one who is thoroughly instructed in divine things, who has his heart united to God, whose disordered tempers and passions are purified and restored to harmony and order; every one who has in him the mind that was in Christ, though he cannot be above, yet will be as, his Teacher,—“holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” The disciple who perfectly understands the rules, and sees the example, of his Master, will think it his business to tread exactly in his steps, to do and suffer.

7. *Lord, Lord*—God judges of the heart, not by words, but by works. A good servant never disputes, speaks little, and always follows his work. Such a servant a real Christian is; such is a faithful minister, always intent either on the work of his own salvation, or that of his neighbour; speaking more to God than to men; and to these as in the presence of God. The tongue is fitly compared by one to a pump, which empties the heart, but neither fills nor cleanses it. The love of God is a hidden spring, which supplies the heart continually, and never permits it to be dry or unfruitful.

SECTION LXVI.—JESUS CHRIST HEALS THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW VIII. 5—13; LUKE VII. 1—10.

Now when Jesus had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum; and when he was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a certain centurion, beseeching him *for his* servant, who was dear unto him, *and who* was sick of the palsy,¹ and ready to die, *being* grievously tormented. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation,² and he hath built us a synagogue. Jesus saith, I will come and heal him. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: For I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: But speak the word only,³ and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me: And I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness:⁴ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done⁵ unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.⁶ And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole⁷ that had been sick.

1. *Sick of the palsy*—This centurion did not act as many masters do, when their servants are afflicted,—have them immediately removed to an infirmary, often to a workhouse; or sent home to friends or relatives, who probably either care nothing for them, or are unable to afford them any of the comforts of life. In case of a contagious disorder, it may be necessary to remove an infected person to such places

as are best calculated to cure the distemper, and prevent the spread of the contagion. But, in all common cases, the servant should be considered as a child, and receive the same friendly attention. If, by a hasty, unkind, and unnecessary removal, the servant die, are not the master and mistress murderers before God?

2. *He loveth our nation*—He is a warm friend to the Jews; and has given a full

proof of his affection to them in building them a *synagogue*. This he had done at his own proper charges; having, no doubt, employed his own men in the work.

3. *But speak the word only*—See here the pattern of that living faith and genuine humility which ought always to accompany the prayer of a sinner. Jesus can will away the palsy, and speak away the most grievous torments. The first degree of humility is to acknowledge the necessity of God's mercy, and our own inability to help ourselves: The second, to confess the freeness of his grace, and our own utter unworthiness. Ignorance, unbelief, and presumption will ever retard our spiritual cure.

4. *Shall be cast out into outer darkness*—How many of those who are called Christians suffer the kingdom, the graces, and the salvation which they had in their hands, to be lost; while West-India negroes, American Indians, Hindoo polytheists, and atheistic Hottentots, obtain salvation! An eternity of darkness, fears, and pains, for comparatively a moment of sensual gratification,—how terrible the thought! What "outer darkness," or "that darkness, that which is outermost," may refer to, in eternal damnation, is hard to say: Gnashing, or chattering, of teeth, conveys the idea, not only of extreme anguish, but of extreme cold; some have imagined that the punishment of the damned consists in sudden transitions from extreme heat, to extreme cold; the extremes of both I have found to produce exactly the same sensation.

5. *As thou hast believed, so be it done*—Let the mercy thou request be equal to the faith thou hast brought to receive it by. "According to thy faith be it done unto thee," is a general measure of God's dealings with mankind. To get an increase of faith is to get an increase of every grace which constitutes the mind that was in Jesus, and prepares fully for the enjoyment of the kingdom of God. God is the same in the present time which he was in ancient days; and miracles of healing may be wrought on our own bodies and

souls, and on those of others, by the instrumentality of our faith. But, alas! where is faith to be found!

6. *And his servant was healed in the self-same hour*—Faith is never exercised in the power and goodness of God till it is needed; and when it is exercised, God works the miracle of healing. Christ never says, "Believe now for a salvation which thou now needest, and I will give it to thee in some future time." That salvation which is expected through works or sufferings must of necessity be future, as there must be time to work or suffer in; but the salvation which is by faith must be for the present moment, for this simple reason: It is by faith, that God may be manifested and honoured; and not by works or by sufferings, lest any man should boast. To say that, though it is of faith, yet it may, and must in many cases, be delayed, (though the person is coming in the most genuine humility, deepest contrition, and with the liveliest faith in the blood of the Lamb,) is to say that there is still something necessary to be done, either on the part of the person, or on the part of God, in order to procure it; neither of which positions has any truth in it.

7. *Found the servant whole*—This cure was the effect of the faith, prayer, and humility of the centurion, through which the almighty energy of Jesus Christ was conveyed to the sick man. But these very graces in the centurion were the products of grace. It is God himself who, by the gifts of his mercy, disposes the soul to receive its cure; and nothing can contribute to the reception of his grace but what is the fruit of grace itself. The apostle says, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men," Titus ii. 11. It should therefore be our concern, not to resist the operations of this grace; for though we cannot endure ourselves with any gracious disposition, yet we can quench the Spirit, by whose agency these are produced in the soul. The centurion had not received the grace of God in vain.

SECTION LXVII.—CHRIST RAISES A WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN.

A.D. 27.

MARK III. 19—21; LUKE VII. 11—18.

AND they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of *it*, they went out to lay hold on him: For they said, He is beside himself.¹ And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out,² the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: And much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: And they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.³ And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: And they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.⁴ And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.⁵

1. *They said, He is beside himself*—It was the enemies of Christ that raised this report; and his relatives, probably thinking that it was true, went to confine him. Let a Christian but neglect the care of his body for a time, in striving to enter in at the strait gate; let a minister of Christ but impair his health by his pastoral labours; presently "he is distracted;" he has "not the least conduct nor discretion." But let a man forget his soul, let him destroy his health by debaucheries, let him expose his life through ambition, and he may, notwithstanding, pass for a very prudent and sensible man!

2. *Carried out*—The Jews always buried their dead without the city, except those of the family of David. No burying-places should be tolerated within cities or towns; much less in or about churches and chapels. This custom is excessively injurious to the inhabitants; and especially to those who frequent public worship in such chapels and churches. God, decency, and health forbid this shocking abomination. From long observation I can attest that churches and

chapels situated in grave-yards, and those especially within whose walls the dead are interred, are perfectly unwholesome; and many, by attending such places, are shortening their passage to the house appointed for the living. What increases the iniquity of this abominable and deadly work is, that the burying-grounds attached to many churches and chapels are made a source of private gain. The whole of this preposterous conduct is as indecorous and unhealthy as it is profane. Every man should know that the gas which is disengaged from putrid flesh, and particularly from a human body, is not only unfriendly to, but destructive of, animal life. Superstition first introduced a practice which self-interest and covetousness continue to maintain.

3. *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise*—“The king of terrors was met in the moment of his conquest, clothed in the symbols of his terrific power—the coffin, the bier, the mourning train—trampling under foot youth, beauty, and strength, and deriding maternal affliction and distress. And Jesus ‘came and touched the bier:’

And they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.' There is no circumstance in the transaction affects me more. In the very moment in which the spoils of death are rescued, and the power and authority of Godhead are exemplified, by the Saviour of men, at that very moment, he shows himself to be touched with the sorrows of humanity, melts in compassion for a widowed mourner, and by a most stupendous miracle turns the tide of her grief! The joy of this widow, when she embraced her son, warm with restored life and affection, was but an example of what shall be felt, when the same all-powerful, all-compassionate hand shall deliver millions of sons and daughters to the arms of their transported parents, to be separated no more for ever!"—BROMLEY.

4. *God hath visited his people*.—Sometimes God visited his people in the way of judgment, to consume them in their transgressions; but it was now plain, that he had visited them in the most tender compassion and mercy.

5. *The disciples of John shewed him, &c.*—It is very likely that John's disciples attended the ministry of our Lord at particular times; and this, we may suppose, was a common case among the disciples of different Jewish teachers. Though bigotry existed in its most formidable shape between the Jews and Samaritans, yet we do not find that it had any place between Jews and Jews, though they were of different sects, and attached to different teachers.

In this resurrection of the widow's son, four things are highly worthy of notice: I. The meeting. II. What Christ did to raise the dead man. III. What the man did when raised to life; and, IV. The effect produced on the minds of the people:—

I. THE MEETING.

(1.) It was uncommon—It was a meeting of life and death, of consolation and distress. On the one part Jesus, accompanied by his disciples, and an innumerable crowd of people, advance towards the gate of the city of Nain: On the other part, a funeral solemnity proceeds out of the gate;

a person of distinction, as we may imagine from the number of the people who accompanied the corpse, is carried out to be buried. Wherever Jesus goes, he meets death or misery; and wherever he comes, he dispenses life and salvation.

(2.) It was instructive—A young man was carried to the grave; an only son; cut off in the flower of his age from the pleasures, honours, profits, and expectations of life; a multitude of relatives, friends, and neighbours, in tears, affliction, and distress, accompanied the corpse. Behold the present life in its true point of light! How deceitful is the world! To hide its vanity and wretchedness, funeral pomp takes the place of the decorations of life and health; and pride, which carries the person through life, cleaves to the putrid carcase in the ridiculous adornments of palls, scarfs, cloaks, and feathers! Sin has a complete triumph, when pride is one of the principal bearers to the tomb. And shall not the living lay these things to heart? Remember, ye that are young, the young die oftener than the old; and it is because so many of the former die, that there are so few of the latter to die.

(3.) It was an affecting meeting—The mother of this young man followed the corpse of her son; her distress was extreme. She had already lost her husband, and in losing her only son she loses all that could be reckoned dear to her in the world. She lost her support, her glory, and the name of her family from among the tribes of her people. Jesus sees her in this state of affliction, and was moved with compassion towards her. This God of goodness cannot see the wretched without commiserating their state, and providing for their salvation.

(4.) It was a happy meeting—Jesus approaches this distressed widow, and says, "Weep not." But who, with propriety, can give such advice in a case like this? Only that God who can dry up the fountain of grief, and remove the cause of distress. Weep for thy sin, weep for thy relatives, weep after Christ, and God will infallibly comfort thee.

II. WHAT CHRIST DID TO RAISE THIS DEAD MAN.

(1.) He came up—When the blessed God is about to save a soul from spiritual

death, he comes up to the heart by the light of his Spirit, by the preaching of his word, and by a thousand other methods, which all prove that his name is Mercy, and his nature Love.

(2.) "He touched the bier"—God often stretches out his hand against the matter or occasion of sin, renders that public that was before hidden, lays afflictions upon the body; by some evil disease effaces that beauty, or impairs that strength, which were the occasions of sin; disconcerts the schemes and blasts the property of the worldly man. These were carrying him down to the chambers of death, and the merciful God is thus delivering him out of the hands of his murderers.

(3.) He commanded—"Young man: I say unto thee, Arise." Sinners, you have been dead in trespasses and sins too long! Now hear the voice of the Son of God. Young people! To you in particular is this commandment addressed. Delay not a moment. It will be more easy for you to return to God now than at any future time. And perhaps the present call may never be repeated. The sooner you hear the voice of God, the sooner you shall be happy.

III. WHAT THE MAN DID WHEN RAISED TO LIFE.

(1.) He sat up—When the quickening voice of God reaches the heart of a sinner, his first business is to lift up his head to contemplate the awful state in which he is found, and the horrible pit over which he hangs, and look about for a deliverer from the hell that is moved from beneath to meet him at his coming.

(2.) He began to speak—Prayer to God, for the salvation he needs, is indispensably requisite to every awakened sinner. Let him speak in prayer and praise; prayer, for present salvation; and praise, because he is still out of hell. Let him also declare the power and goodness of God, which have

thus rescued him from the bitter pains of an eternal death.

(3.) He walked. He (Christ) presented him to his mother—Those who were carrying the corpse, having heard the voice of the young man, immediately laid down the bier; and, the young man stepping directly on the ground, Jesus took him by the hand, and conducted him to his mother. What a change from the deepest affliction to the highest ecstasy of joy must have now taken place in this widow's heart! Happy moment; when the quickening power of Christ restores a prodigal son to a disconsolate parent, and a member to Christ's mystical body, the church militant!

IV. THE EFFECT PRODUCED ON THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE.

(1.) Fear seized them—A religious reverence penetrated their hearts, while witnessing the effects of the sovereign power of Christ. Thus should we contemplate the wonders of God's grace in the conviction and conversion of sinners.

(2.) They glorified God—They plainly saw that he had now visited his people; the miracle proclaimed his presence, and that a great Prophet was risen among them; and they expect to be speedily instructed in all righteousness. The conversion of a sinner to God should be matter of public joy to all that fear his name; and should be considered as a full proof, that the God of our fathers is still among their children.

(3.) They published abroad the account—The work of the grace of God should be made known to all; the gospel should be preached in every place; and the miracle-working power of Christ every where recommended to notice. If those who are raised from the death of sin were more zealous in discoursing of, walking in, and recommending, the gospel of the grace of God; the kingdom of Christ would soon have a more extensive spread; and the souls thus employed would be incessantly watered from on high.

SECTION LXVIII.—MESSAGE FROM JOHN TO CHRIST.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XI. 2—6; LUKE VII. 19—23.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he calling *unto him* two of his disciples sent *them* unto Jesus,¹ saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in the same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John again what things ye have seen and heard,² how that the blind receive their sight,³ the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached.⁴ And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.⁵

1. *Sent them unto Jesus, &c.*—"John sent his disciples to Christ, not so much for his own satisfaction as for theirs. They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith, and needed instruction and confirmation; and in this matter they were somewhat prejudiced, being zealous for their master, they were jealous of our Master; were loath to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, because he eclipsed John; and are loath to believe their own master, when they think he speaks against himself and them. John was all along industrious to turn over his disciples to Christ. Perhaps he foresaw his death approaching, and therefore would bring his disciples to be better acquainted with Christ, under whose guardianship he must leave them."—HENRY.

2. *Tell John again what things ye have seen and heard*—Christ would have men to judge only of him and of others by their works. This is the only safe way of judging. A man is not to be credited because he professes to know such and such things; but because he demonstrates by his conduct that his pretensions are not vain.

3. *The blind receive their sight, &c.*—These miracles were not only the most convincing proofs of the supreme power of Christ, but were also emblematic of that work of salvation which he effects in the souls of men. (1.) Sinners are blind;

their understanding is so darkened by sin, that they see not the way of truth and salvation. (2.) They are lame; not able to walk in the path of righteousness. (3.) They are leprous, their souls are defiled with sin, the most loathsome and inveterate disease; deepening in themselves, and infecting others. (4.) They are deaf to the voice of God, his word, and their own conscience. (5.) They are dead in trespasses and sins; God, who is the life of the soul, being separated from it by iniquity. Nothing less than the power of Christ can redeem from all this; and, from all this, that power of Christ actually does redeem every penitent believing soul. Giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead, are allowed by the ancient rabbins to be works which the Messiah should perform, when he should manifest himself in Israel.

4. *And to the poor the gospel is preached*—And what was this gospel? Why, the glad tidings that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; that he opens the eyes of the blind; enables the lame to walk with an even, steady, and constant pace in the way of holiness; cleanses the lepers from all the defilement of their sins; opens the ears of the deaf to hear his pardoning words; and raises those who were dead in trespasses and sins to live in union with himself to all eternity.

"If we survey the gospel of Christ, it

presents to us a glorious plan of salvation ; such as no human ingenuity could either discover or devise. It had, indeed, been gradually unfolding, through the patriarchal and prophetic ages ; but the life and immortality which the gospel brought fully to light were only seen as through a glass darkly. Nevertheless, even under these obscure dispensations, the light which it imparted was as much superior to that which guided the philosophers,—ethical writers of the heathen world,—who were without its influence, as the brilliancy of the moon, when shining in all her splendour, is to the dim twinkling of a star. In the meanwhile, it was in a manner hidden from the wise and prudent, and couched under ceremonies, types, and shadows, which were better calculated to raise expectation than to gratify it. All these things had a future aspect ; and they directed the believers of those days to anticipate a brighter dispensation, and a more refulgent light. When, therefore, the ‘ Deliverer came out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; ’—when Christ made his personal appearance, and developed more fully the plan of redemption and of salvation in his gospel ;—it might be said, that ‘ the Sun of Righteousness arose, with healing under his wings, ’ to enlighten, to enliven, and to fertilize the moral world. Through this gospel he has shown us the way to happiness and God.”

—S. DREW.

5. *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*—Or, “ Happy is he who will not be stumbled at me ; ” for the word in its root signifies to “ hit against ” or “ stumble over ” a thing, which one may meet with in the way. The Jews, as was before remarked, expected a temporal deliverer. Many might be tempted to reject Christ, because of his mean appearance, &c., and so lose the benefit of salvation through him. To instruct and caution such, our blessed Lord spoke these words. By his poverty and meanness he condemns the pride and pomp of this world. He who will not humble himself, and become base, and poor, and vile in his own eyes, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. It is the poor, in general, who hear the gospel ; the rich and the great are either too busy, or too much gratified with temporal things, to pay any attention to the voice of God.

“ These words, though they are mild and soft, and palmy and pleasant, ‘ Blessed is he that is not offended in me, ’ yet they carry a sting in them, they breathe terror too ; for this plain intimation is carried in them : ‘ Woe to him that is offended when so clear light shines, when there is so plain and manifest discovery who I am : Fearful is the case of that man who stumbles, takes offence, and cannot see when so bright light shines upon him, revealing me. ’ ”

Howe.

SECTION LXIX.—CHRIST’S CHARACTER OF JOHN.

A.D. 27.

MATT. XI. 7—19 ; LUKE VII. 24—35.

AND when the messengers of John were departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see ? ¹ A reed shaken with the wind ? ² But what went ye out for to see ? A man clothed in soft raiment ? ³ Behold, they that wear soft *clothing*, and are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings’ courts.⁴ But what went ye out for to see ? A prophet ? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.⁵ For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger ⁶ before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women

there hath not risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist: ⁷ Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven ⁸ is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, ⁹ and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come. ¹⁰ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. ¹¹ And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; ¹² and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, ¹³ and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children. ¹⁴

1. *What went ye out into the wilderness to see?*—The purport of our Lord's design, in this and the following verses, is to convince the scribes and Pharisees of the inconsistency of their conduct in acknowledging John Baptist for a divinely-authorized teacher, and not believing in the very Christ which he pointed out to them. He also shows, from the excellencies of John's character, that their confidence in him was not misplaced, and that this was a farther argument why they should have believed in him, whom the Baptist proclaimed as being far superior to himself.

2. *A reed shaken with the wind?*—An emblem of an irresolute, unsteady mind, which believes and speaks one thing to-day, and another to-morrow. Christ asks these Jews, if they had ever found any thing in John like this: "Was he not ever steady and uniform in the testimony he bore to me?" The first excellency which Christ notices in John was his steadiness; convinced once of the truth, he continued to believe and assert it. This is essentially necessary to every preacher, and to every private Christian. He who changes about from opinion to opinion, and from one sect or party to another, is never to be depended

on: There is much reason to believe that such a person is either mentally weak, or has never been rationally and divinely convinced of the truth.

3. *A man clothed in soft raiment?*—A second excellency in John was, his sober and mortified life. A preacher of the gospel should have nothing about him which savours of effeminacy and worldly pomp. He is awfully mistaken who thinks to prevail on the world to hear him and receive the truth, by conforming himself to its fashions and manners. Excepting the mere colour of his clothes, we can scarcely now distinguish a preacher of the gospel, whether in the establishment of the country, or out of it, from the merest worldly man. Ruffles, powder, and fribble seem universally to prevail. Thus the church and the world begin to shake hands, the latter still retaining its enmity to God. How can those who profess to preach the doctrine of the cross act in this way? Is not a worldly-minded preacher, in the most peculiar sense, an abomination in the eyes of the Lord?

4. *Are in kings' courts?*—A third excellency in John was, he did not affect high things. He was contented to live in the

desert, and to announce the solemn and severe truths of his doctrine to the simple inhabitants of the country. Let it be well observed, that the preacher who conforms to the world in his clothing is never in his element but when he is frequenting the houses and tables of the rich and great.

5. *A prophet? yea, and more than a prophet*—That is, one more excellent than a prophet; one greatly beyond all who had come before him, being the immediate forerunner of Christ, and who was especially commissioned to prepare the way of the Lord. This was a fourth excellency: He was a prophet, a teacher, a man divinely commissioned to point out Jesus and his salvation; and more excellent than any of the old prophets, because he not only pointed out this Christ, but saw him, and had the honour of dying for that sacred truth which he steadily believed and boldly proclaimed.

6. *Behold I send my messenger*—A fifth excellency of the Baptist was, his preparing the way of the Lord; being the instrument, in God's hand, of preparing the people's hearts to receive the Lord Jesus; and it was probably through his preaching that so many thousands attached themselves to Christ, immediately on his appearing as a public Teacher.

7. *A greater prophet than John the Baptist*—A sixth excellency of the Baptist: He was greater than any prophet from the beginning of the world till that time: (1.) Because he was prophesied of by them, Isaiah xl. 3, and Mal. iii. 1, where Jesus Christ himself seems to be the speaker. (2.) Because he had the privilege of showing the fulfilment of their predictions, by pointing out that Christ as now come, which they foretold should come. And, (3.) Because he saw and enjoyed that salvation which they could only foretell.

8. *Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven*—By "the kingdom of heaven" in this verse is meant, the "fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace;" which fulness was not known till after Christ had been crucified, and had risen from the dead. Now, the least in the kingdom, the meanest preacher of a crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour, was greater than John, who was not permitted

to live to see the plenitude of gospel grace, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Let the reader observe, (1.) That the kingdom of heaven here does not mean the state of future glory. (2.) That it is not in holiness or devotedness to God that the least in this kingdom is greater than John; but, (3.) That it is merely in the difference of the ministry. The prophets pointed out a Christ that was coming; John showed that that Christ was then among them; and the preachers of the gospel prove, that this Christ has suffered, and entered into his glory, and that repentance and remission of sins are proclaimed through his blood.

9. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*—The tax-gatherers and Heathens, whom the scribes and Pharisees think have no right to the kingdom of the Messiah, filled with holy zeal and earnestness, seize at once on the proffered mercy of the gospel, and so take the kingdom as by force from those learned doctors who claimed for themselves the chiefest places in that kingdom. Christ himself said, "The tax-gatherers and harlots go before you into the kingdom of God." He that will "take," get possession of, the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and spiritual joy, must be in earnest. All hell will oppose him in every step he takes; and if a man be not absolutely determined to give up his sins and evil companions, and have his soul saved at all hazards, and at every expense, he will surely perish everlastingly. This requires a violent earnestness.

10. *This is Elias, which was for to come*—This should always be written Elijah, that as strict a conformity as possible might be kept up between the names in the Old Testament and the New. The prophet Malachi, who predicted the coming of the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah, gave the three following distinct characteristics of him: (1.) That he should be the forerunner and messenger of the Messiah: "Behold I send my messenger before me." (2.) That he should appear before the destruction of the second temple: "Even the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple." (3.) That he should preach repentance to the Jews; and that, some time after, the "great and terrible day of the Lord should come," and the Jewish "land be smitten with a curse."

Now these three characters agree perfectly with the conduct of the Baptist, and what shortly followed his preaching, and have not been found in any one else; which is a convincing proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

11. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*—As if our Lord had said, These things are so clear and manifest, that a man has only to hear them to be convinced and fully satisfied of their truth. But neither the Jews of that time, nor of the succeeding times to the present day, have heard or considered these things. When spoken to on these subjects, their common custom is to stop their ears, spit out, and blaspheme; this shows not only a bad, but a ruined, cause. They are deeply and wilfully blind. They will not come unto the light, lest their deeds should become manifest, that they are not wrought in God. They have ears, but they will not hear.

The will of God was, that all the inhabitants of Judea should repent at the preaching of John, be baptized, and believe in Christ Jesus. Now, as they did not repent, &c., at John's preaching, so they did not believe his testimony concerning Christ: Thus the will, gracious counsel, or design of God, relative to their salvation,

was annulled or frustrated. They disbelieved his promises, despised the Messiah, and disobeyed his precepts.

12. *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine*—Leading a very austere and mortified life; and yet ye did not receive him. A sinner will not be persuaded, that what he has no mind to imitate can come from God. There are some who will rather blame holiness itself, than esteem it in those whom they do not like.

13. *And ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, &c.*—Whatever measures the followers of God may take, they will not escape the censure of the world: The best way is not to be concerned at them. Iniquity, being always ready to oppose and contradict the divine conduct, often contradicts and exposes itself.

14. *But wisdom is justified of all her children*—Those who follow the dictates of true wisdom ever justify, point out as excellent, the holy maxims by which they are guided; for they find the way pleasantness, and the path, peace. "Of," here, and in many places of our translation, ought to be written "by," in modern English.

SECTION LXX.—CHRIST REPREHENDS THE IMPENITENT.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW XI. 20—30.

THEN began he to upbraid the cities¹ wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable² for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: For if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom³ in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou

hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father:⁴ For so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father:⁵ And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son,⁶ and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. Come unto me,⁷ all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden,⁸ and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,⁹ and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:¹⁰ And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy,¹¹ and my burden is light.

1. *Then began he to upbraid the cities*—The more God has done to draw men unto himself, the less excusable are they, if they continue in iniquity. If our blessed Lord had not done every thing that was necessary for the salvation of these people, he could not have reproached them for their impotence.

2. *But it shall be more tolerable*—Every thing will help to overwhelm the impenitent at the tribunal of God; the benefits and favours which they have received, as well as the sins which they have committed.

3. *But it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom*—In Jude, we are told that these persons are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah happened A. M. 2107, which was 1897 years before the incarnation. What a terrible thought is this! It will be more tolerable for certain sinners, who have already been damned nearly four thousand years, than for those who live and die infidels under the gospel. There are various degrees of punishments in hell, answerable to various degrees of guilt; and the contempt manifested to, and the abuse made of, the preaching of the gospel, will rank semi-infidel Christians in the highest list of transgressors, and purchase them the hottest place in hell! Great God! save the reader from this destruction!

4. *Even so, Father*—It was right that the heavenly wisdom, despised, rejected, and persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees, should be offered to the simple people, and afterwards to the foolish people, the Gentiles, who are the children of wisdom, and justify God in his ways, by bringing forth that fruit of the gospel of which the Pharisees refused to receive even the seed.

“Into what rich, hallowing, and consolatory views of the truth of the holy scriptures are those led, who, though neither ‘wise nor learned,’ according to the world’s estimate, look up with simplicity to the Fountain of inspiration himself, and read the sacred page with the sincere desire to do as well as to know ‘the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God!’ To all such, ‘the entrance of the word giveth light;’ and ‘the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.’”—R. WATSON.

5. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father*—This is a great truth, and the key of the science of salvation. The man Christ Jesus receives from the Father, and in consequence of his union with the Eternal Godhead becomes the Lord and Sovereign Dispenser of all things. All the springs of the divine favour are in the hands of Christ, as Priest of God, and atoning Sacrifice for men: All good proceeds from him, as Saviour, Mediator, Head, Pattern, Pastor, and Sovereign Judge of the whole world.

6. *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man, &c.*—None can fully comprehend the nature and attributes of God, but Christ; and none can fully comprehend the nature, incarnation, &c., of Christ, but the Father. The full comprehension and acknowledgment of the Godhead, and the mystery of the Trinity, belong to God alone.

7. *Come unto me*—This phrase, in the new covenant, implies simply, believing in Christ, and becoming his disciple or follower.

8. *All ye that labour and are heavy laden*—The Jews, heavily laden with the burdensome rites of the Mosaic institution, rendered still more oppressive by the addi-

tions made by the scribes and Pharisees, who, our Lord says, "bound on heavy burdens;" and labouring, by their observance of the law, to make themselves pleasing to God; are here invited to lay down their load, and receive the salvation procured for them by Christ.

Sinners, wearied in the ways of iniquity, are also invited to come to this Christ, and find speedy relief. Penitents, burdened with the guilt of their crimes, may come to this sacrifice, and find instant pardon. Believers, sorely tempted, and oppressed by the remains of the carnal mind, may come to this blood, that cleanseth from all unrighteousness; and, purified from all sin, and powerfully succoured in every temptation, they shall find uninterrupted rest in this complete Saviour. All are invited to come, and all are promised rest. If few find rest from sin and vile affections, it is because few come to Christ to receive it.

9. *Take my yoke upon you*—Strange paradox! that a man, already weary and overloaded, must take a new weight upon him, in order to be eased and find rest! But this advice is similar to that saying: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee;" that is, Trust thy soul

and concerns to him, and he will carry both thyself and thy load.

10. *I am meek and lowly in heart*—Wherever pride and anger dwell, there is nothing but mental labour and agony; but, where the meekness and humility of Christ dwell, all is smooth, even, peaceable, and quiet; for the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

11. *For my yoke is easy*—My gospel imposes nothing that is difficult; on the contrary, it provides for the complete removal of all that which oppresses and renders man miserable, namely, sin. The commandments of Christ are not grievous. Hear the whole: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Can any thing be more congenial to the nature of man than love?—such a love as is inspired by God, and in which the soul rests supremely satisfied and infinitely happy? Taste, and know by experience, how good the Lord is, and how worthy his yoke is to be taken, borne, and loved. This most tender invitation of the compassionate Jesus is sufficient to inspire the most diffident soul with confidence.

SECTION LXXI.—CHRIST VINDICATES THE WOMAN WHO ANOINTED HIM.

A. D. 27.

LUKE VII. 36—50.

AND one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner,¹ when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind *him*,² weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: For she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith,

Master, say on. There was a certain creditor³ which had two debtors: The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?⁴ Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most.⁵ And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: But she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much:⁶ But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.⁷ And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.⁸ And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee;⁹ go in peace.

1. *A woman, which was a sinner*—Many suppose that this woman had been a notorious public prostitute; but this is taking the subject by the very worst handle. My own opinion is, that she had been a mere Heathen, who dwelt in this city, (probably Capernaum,) who, through the ministry of Christ, had been before this converted to God, and came now to give this public testimony of her gratitude to her gracious Deliverer from the darkness and guilt of sin.

2. *Stood at his feet behind him*—In taking their meals, the eastern people reclined on one side; the loins and knees being bent to make the more room, the feet of each person were turned outwards behind him. This is the meaning of standing behind at his feet.

3. *A certain creditor, &c.*—It is plain that, in this parable, our Lord means, by the creditor, God; and, by the two debtors, Simon and the woman who was present. Simon who had the light of the law, and who, in consequence of his profession as a Pharisee, was obliged to abstain from outward iniquity, might be considered as the debtor who owed only fifty pence, or *denarii*. The woman, whom I have supposed to be a Heathen, not having these advantages, having no rule to regulate her actions, and

no curb on her evil propensities, may be considered as the debtor who owed five hundred pence, or *denarii*. And when both were compared, Simon's debt to God might be considered, in reference to hers, as fifty to five hundred. However, we find, notwithstanding this great disparity, both were insolvent. Simon, the religious Pharisee, could no more pay his fifty to God than this poor Heathen her five hundred; and, if both be not freely forgiven by the divine mercy, both must finally perish. Having nothing to pay, he kindly forgave them both. Some think that this very Simon was no considerable debtor to our Lord, as having been mercifully cleansed from a leprosy; for he is supposed to be the same as "Simon the leper."

4. *Which of them will love him most?*—Which is under the greater obligation, and should love him most?

5. *He to whom he forgave most*—By this acknowledgment he was, unknowingly to himself, prepared to receive our Lord's reproof.

6. *For she loved much*—Or, "therefore she loved much." It appears to have been a consciousness of God's forgiving love that brought her at this time to the Pharisee's house. In the common translation her forgiveness is represented to be the conse-

quence of her loving much, which is causing the tree to produce the root, and not the root the tree.

7. *To whom little is forgiven, loveth little*—That is, a man's love to God will be in proportion to the obligations he feels himself under to the bounty of his Maker.

"Where the affections take no part in religion, the sense of obligation to the object of worship must be low indeed. Cold and calculating professors may brand warm affections with the opprobrious epithet of 'enthusiasm;' but they are vindicated by Him whose approbation is alone worth seeking; and they are enkindled by a corresponding flame in the heart of the Redeemer himself. When men are indifferent to the honour of God; cold in the service of religion; slothful in fulfilling its obligations; excited with difficulty to support, with their property, talents, and countenance, the cause of the Redeemer; careless of the perishing souls of immortals; formal in their observances; tenacious of trifles; censorious in their spirits; unforgiving in their tempers; they love little; they afford reason to fear, that they are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."—
W. B. COLLYER.

8. *Thy sins are forgiven*—He gave her the fullest assurance of what he had said

before to Simon: "Thy sins are forgiven." While the Pharisee murmured, the poor penitent rejoiced.

9. *Thy faith hath saved thee*—Thy faith hath been the instrument of receiving the salvation which is promised to those who repent. "Go in peace." Though peace of conscience be the inseparable consequence of the pardon of sin, yet here it seems to be used as a valediction or farewell; as if he had said, "May goodness and mercy continue to follow thee!"

"The doctrine of the parable is, that pardon of sin is wholly gratuitous, independent of any consideration of worthiness or ability in the sinner. When the debtors had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both, wholly remitted their debt, and cancelled their obligation. Answering to the doctrine of the parable, is the example: A woman who was a sinner, yet being penitent, and having faith in Christ, is freely forgiven. Free and full salvation, through the sole mercy of God in Christ, and by faith in his merit, is the glorious doctrine of the New Testament; nor can it lead to any abuse, rightly understood. For he that hath much forgiven will love much; and to him that loveth, 'the commandments of God are not grievous.'"—
R. WATSON.

SECTION LXXII.—CHRIST CURES A DEMONIAK.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW XII. 22—30; MARK III. 22—27;

LUKE VIII. 1—3; XI. 14—23.

AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: And the twelve *were* with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,¹ and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: ² And he healed him, insomuch that it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees, and the scribes which came down from Jerusalem, heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* hath Beelzebub, and doth not cast out devils, but by

Beelzebub, the prince *or* the chief of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and he called them unto him, and said unto them; in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? Every kingdom divided against itself cannot stand,³ *but* is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand, *but* falleth. And if Satan rise up against himself,⁴ and cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? he cannot stand, but hath an end; because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out?⁵ therefore they shall be your judges.⁶ But if I cast out devils by the finger *or* the Spirit of God,⁷ then no doubt the kingdom of God⁸ is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house,⁹ and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me;¹⁰ and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

1. *Out of whom went seven devils*—Who had been possessed in a most extraordinary manner; probably a case of inveterate lunacy, brought on by the influence of evil spirits. The number seven may here express the superlative degree. Mary Magdalene is commonly thought to have been a prostitute before she came to the knowledge of Christ, and then to have been a remarkable penitent. So historians and painters represent her; but neither from this passage, nor from any other of the New Testament, can such a supposition be legitimately drawn. She is here represented as one who had been possessed with seven demons; and as one among other women who had been healed by Christ of evil, or wicked, spirits and infirmities. As well might Joanna and Susanna come in for a share of the censure as this Mary Magdalene; for they seem to have been disposed likewise by Jesus, according to St. Luke's account of them. They had all had infirmities, of what sort it is not said, and those infirmities were occasioned by evil spirits within them; and Jesus had healed them all: But Mary Magdalene, by her behaviour, and constant attendance on Jesus in his life-time, at his crucifixion,

and at his grave, seems to have exceeded all the other women in duty and respect to his person.

There is a marvellous propensity in commentators to make some of the women mentioned in the sacred writings appear as women of ill fame; therefore Rahab must be a harlot; and Mary Magdalene, a prostitute; and yet nothing of the kind can be proved either in the former or in the latter case. Poor Mary Magdalene is made the patroness of penitent prostitutes, both by papists and protestants; and to the scandal of her name, and the reproach of the gospel, houses fitted up for the reception of such are termed "Magdalene hospitals!" and the persons themselves "Magdalenes!" There is not only no proof that this person was such as commentators represent her, but there is the strongest presumptive proof against it; for, if she ever had been such, it would have been contrary to every rule of prudence, and every dictate of wisdom, for Christ and his apostles to have permitted such a person to associate with them, however fully she might have been converted to God, and however exemplary her life, at that time, might have been. As the world, who had

seen her conduct, and knew her character, had she been such as is insinuated, could not see the inward change, and as they sought to overwhelm Christ and his disciples with obloquy and reproach on every occasion, they would certainly have availed themselves of so favourable an opportunity to subject the character and ministry of Christ to the blackest censure, had he permitted even a converted prostitute to minister to him and his disciples. They were ready enough to say that he was the "friend of publicans and sinners," because he conversed with them in order to instruct and save their souls; but they could never say he was a friend of prostitutes, because it does not appear that such persons ever came to Christ; or that he, in the way of his ministry, ever went to them. I conclude, therefore, that the common opinion is a vile slander on the character of one of the best women mentioned in the gospel of God; and a reproach cast on the character and conduct of Christ and his disciples. From the whole account of Mary Magdalene, it is highly probable that she was a person of great respectability in that place; such a person as the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, could associate with; and a person on whose conduct or character the calumniating Jews could cast no aspersions.

2. *One possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb*—A person from whom the indwelling demon took away both sight and hearing. Satan makes himself master of the heart, the eyes, and the tongue of the sinner. His heart he fills with the love of sin; his eyes he blinds, that he may not see his guilt, and the perdition which awaits him; and his tongue he hinders from prayer and supplication, though he gives it increasing liberty in blasphemies, lies, slanders, &c. None but Jesus can redeem from this threefold captivity.

3. *Every kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, &c.*—Our Lord's argument runs: "The welfare of any kingdom, city, or family, depends on its concord and unanimity; satan, like every other potentate, must wish to rule his empire in peace and security; how, then, can he be in league with me, who oppose his authority, and am destroying his kingdom?" The reasoning of the Pharisees was not expressed; and

Jesus, "knowing their thoughts," gave them ample proof of his omniscience. This, with our Lord's masterly confutation of their reasonings, by a conclusion drawn from their own premises, one would have supposed, might have humbled and convinced these men; but the most conclusive reasoning, and the most astonishing miracles, were lost upon a people who were obstinately determined to disbelieve every thing good, relative to Christ. How true the saying, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not!"

4. *If satan rise up against himself, &c.*—A good cause will produce a good effect, and an evil cause an evil effect. Were I on satan's side, I would act for his interest, and confirm his influence among you; but I oppose his maxims by my doctrine, and his influence by my power.

5. *By whom do your children cast them out?*—Our Lord's argument here is extremely conclusive: If the man who casts out demons proves himself thereby to be in league with and influenced by satan, then your disciples, and you who taught them, are all of you in league with the devil: Ye must either give up your assertion, that I cast out demons by Beelzebub, or else admit this conclusion, in its fullest force and latitude, that ye are all children of the devil, and leagued with him against God. Envy causes persons often to condemn in one what they approve in another.

6. *Therefore they shall be your judges*—"Ye do not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but, on the evidence of these miracles, ye receive them as the messengers of God. Nevertheless, ye reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil spirits. Is this conduct of a piece? Wherefore these prophets shall be your judges; they shall condemn you."—CHANDLER.

7. *But if I cast out devils by the finger, or the Spirit, of God*—Perhaps the "Spirit of God" is here mentioned by way of opposition to the magical incantations of the Jews; for it is well known that, by fumigations and magical washings, they professed to cast out devils.

8. *Then no doubt the kingdom of God*—For the destruction of the "kingdom of satan" plainly implies the setting up of the

"kingdom of God." They pretended to be in expectation of the kingdom of God, and consequently of the destruction of the kingdom of satan. But, by being not prepared to receive Christ in these proofs of his divine mission, they showed that their expectation was but pretended. They were too carnal to mind spiritual things.

9. *Else how can one enter into a strong man's house?*—Men, through sin, are become the very house and dwelling-place of satan, having, of their own accord, surrendered themselves to this unjust possessor; for whoever gives up his soul to sin gives it up to the devil. It is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who can deliver from the power of this bondage. When satan is cast out, Jesus purifies and dwells in the heart.

10. *He that is not with me is against me*—In vain do men seek for methods to reconcile God and Mammon. There is no medium between loving the Lord and being his enemy, between belonging to Christ or to satan. If we be on the side of the devil, we must expect to go to the devil's hell; if we be on the side of Christ, we may expect to go to his heaven. When Christ, his truth, and his servants are assaulted, he who does not espouse their cause is not on Christ's side, but incurs the guilt of deserting and betraying him. There are many, it is to be feared, in the world who are really against Christ, and scatter abroad, who flatter themselves that they are workers together with him, and of the number of his friends!

SECTION LXXIII.—THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 31, 32; MARK III. 28—30.

WHEREFORE verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies, wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost¹ shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come;² hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

1. *But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*—Even personal reproaches, revilings, persecutions against Christ, were remissible; but blasphemy, or impious speaking, against the Holy Spirit was to have no forgiveness; that is, when the person obstinately attributed those works to the devil, which he had the fullest evidence could be wrought only by the Spirit of God. That this, and nothing else, is the sin against the Holy Spirit, is evident from the connexion in this place: "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."

Here the matter is made clear beyond the smallest doubt; the "unpardonable sin," as some term it, is neither less nor more than ascribing the miracles of Christ, wrought by the power of God, to the spirit of the devil. Many sincere people have been grievously troubled with apprehensions that they had committed the unpardonable sin; but let it be observed, that no man who believes the divine mission of Jesus Christ ever can commit this sin: Therefore let no man's heart fail because of it, from henceforth and for ever. Amen.

"That is, saying, in opposition to all evidence, and against reasonable conviction, that the 'Spirit of God,' by which our Lord cast out devils, was the unclean and evil spirit, satan himself, and doing this

from enmity to the kingdom and truth of God, which by these miracles the Holy Spirit attested and established, there is no forgiveness. Nothing can be more clear, than that this is the unpardonable blasphemy of which our Lord speaks, and that these are the circumstances under which it was committed."—R. WATSON.

"Should it be questioned, why this blasphemy is considered as being against the Holy Ghost, rather than against Christ, we answer, Because all prophecies, miracles, and extraordinary works, which were accomplished, either by the prophets, apostles, or Christ himself, were wrought by the Holy Ghost; and to attribute his miracles to the agency of the devil, was the vilest slander, and the grossest insult that could be offered to the Spirit of God."—TREFFRY.

2. *Neither in this world, neither in the world to come*—Though I follow the common translation, yet I am fully satisfied the meaning of the words is, "Neither in this dispensation," namely, the Jewish, "nor in that which is to come," namely, the Christian. "The world to come," is a constant phrase for the times of the Messiah in the

Jewish writers. The sin here spoken of by our Lord ranks high in the catalogue of presumptuous sins, for which there was no forgiveness under the Mosaic dispensation. When our Lord says, that such a sin hath no forgiveness, is he not to be understood as meaning that the crime shall be punished under the Christian dispensation as it was under the Jewish, namely, by the destruction of the body? And is not this the same mentioned, 1 John v. 16, called there the "sin unto death;" that is, a sin that was to be punished by the death of the body, while mercy might be extended to the soul? The punishment for presumptuous sins, under the Jewish law, to which our Lord evidently alludes, certainly did not extend to the damnation of the soul, though the body was destroyed; therefore I think that, though there was no such forgiveness to be extended to this crime as to absolve the man from the punishment of temporal death, yet, on repentance, mercy might be extended to the soul; and every sin may be repented of under the gospel dispensation.

SECTION LXXIV.—EVIL AND GOOD MEN KNOWN BY THEIR CONDUCT.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW XII. 33—37; LUKE XI. 27, 28.

EITHER make the tree good,¹ and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: For the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers,² how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart³ the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart⁴ bringeth forth good things: And an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified,⁵ and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice,⁶ and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

1. *Either make the tree good*—That is, the effect will be always similar to the cause; a bad tree will produce bad fruit, and a good tree, good fruit. The works

will resemble the heart : Nothing good can proceed from an evil spirit ; no good fruit can proceed from a corrupt heart. Before the heart of man can produce any good, it must be renewed and influenced by the Spirit of God.

2. *O generation of vipers*—These are apparently severe words ; but they were extremely proper in reference to that execrable people to whom they were addressed : The whole verse is an inference from what was spoken before.

3. *Out of the abundance*, “the overflowings,” *of the heart*—Wicked words and sinful actions may be considered as the overflowings of a heart that is more than full of the spirit of wickedness ; and holy words and righteous deeds may be considered as the overflowings of a heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit, and running over with love to God and man.

4. *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart*—The good heart is the good treasury, and the treasure that is in it is the love of God, and of all mankind. The bad heart is the bad treasury, and its treasure is the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and ill-will to man.

5. *By thy words thou shalt be justified*—That is, the whole tenor of thy conversation will be an evidence for or against thee, in the great day. How many are there who count words for nothing ! and yet eternity

often depends on them. Lord, put a watch before the door of my lips ! is a prayer proper for all men.

“ Words, as well as actions, are to be the subjects of solemn account at the last day ; and the abuse of speech, not less than the abuse of any other faculty, shall subject men to condemnation. What account, then, will mere triflers give, men who spend life in useless talking and ‘ foolish jesting,’ in singing vain songs, and framing vain witticisms ? But still more severe will be the punishment of the censorious, of ‘ lying lips,’ and especially of those whose tongues have been employed in uttering corrupt doctrines, misleading and destructive to the souls of men ! ”—
R. WATSON.

6. *A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, &c.*—It was very natural for a woman, who was probably a mother, to exclaim thus. She thought that the happiness of the woman who was mother to such a Son was great indeed ; but our blessed Lord shows her that even the holy virgin could not be benefited by her merely being the mother of his human nature, and that they only were happy who carried Christ in their hearts. True happiness is found in hearing the glad tidings of salvation by Christ Jesus, and keeping them in a holy heart, and practising them in an unblamable life.

SECTION LXXV.—THE PHARISEES ASK A SIGN.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 38—42 ; LUKE XI. 16, 29—32.

THEN certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, tempting *him* ; and sought of him a sign from heaven, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.¹ But when the people were gathered thick together, he answered and said unto them, This is an evil and adulterous generation,² *which* seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas : For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly : So shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights³ in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment⁴ with this generation, and shall condemn it : Because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a

greater than Jonas *is* here.⁵ The queen of the south⁶ shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: For she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

1. *We would see a sign from thee.*—That is, we wish now to see thee work a miracle. Pride, vain curiosity, and incredulity, have never proof sufficient of the truth; for they will not be satisfied.

“Their fellow-infidels, in all ages, have demanded different evidence from that which God has been pleased to give, and with the same insincerity. He who is unconvinced by proofs so stupendous as those on which Christianity rests, is an unbeliever, not for want of evidence, but from some evil bias upon his judgment and will, which no additional demonstration could remedy.”—R. WATSON.

2. *An evil and adulterous generation.*—Our Lord terms the Jews an adulterous race. Under the old covenant the Jewish nation was represented as in a marriage contract with the Lord of Hosts; as believers in the new covenant are represented as the spouse of Christ. All unfaithfulness and disobedience was considered as a breach of this marriage contract: Hence the persons who were thus guilty are denominated adulterers and adulteresses. But, independently of this, there is the utmost proof, from their own writings, that, in the time of our Lord, they were, most literally, an adulterous race of people.

3. *Three days and three nights.*—Our Lord rose from the grave on the day but one after his crucifixion; so that, in the computation in this verse, the part of the day on which he was crucified, and the part of that on which he rose again, are severally estimated as an entire day; and this, no doubt, exactly corresponded to the time in which Jonah was in the belly of the fish.

4. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment.*—The voice of God, threatening temporal judgments, caused a whole people to repent, who had neither Moses nor

Christ, neither the law nor the prophets, and who, perhaps, never had but this one preacher among them. What judgment may not we expect, if we continue impenitent, after all that God has bestowed upon us!

“The Ninevites, though sinners, were, it seems, conscious that they were so; and the denunciation of divine vengeance, therefore, made an effectual appeal to their fears. The Jews, too, were sinners; but ‘they trusted within themselves that they were righteous.’”—R. WATSON.

5. *A greater than Jonas is here.*—The evidence offered by Jonah sufficed to convince and lead the Ninevites to repentance; but here was more evidence, and a greater person: And yet so obstinate are the Jews, that all is ineffectual. (1.) Christ, who preached to the Jews, was infinitely greater than Jonah in his nature, person, and mission. (2.) Jonah preached repentance in Nineveh only forty days; and Christ preached among the Jews for several years. (3.) Jonah wrought no miracles to authorize his preaching; but Christ wrought miracles every day, in every place where he went, and of every kind. And, (4.) Notwithstanding all this, the people of Judea did not repent, though the people of Nineveh did.

6. *The queen of the south.*—“She is here commended by our Lord for her love of wisdom, of moral wisdom; for in that the philosophy of those ancient times chiefly consisted. And her example condemned the Jews, both because they not only had no desire after true wisdom, but were utterly averse to it; and because she received with docility instruction from the lips of a mere man, who, though great and wise, was inferior to Him whose ministry they proudly and malignantly alighted.”—R. WATSON.

SECTION LXXVI.—THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW XII. 43—45; LUKE XI. 24—26.

WHEN the unclean spirit¹ is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest,² and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house³ from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty,⁴ swept, and garnished.⁵ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked⁶ than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: And the last state of that man is worse than the first.⁷ Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.⁸

1. *When the unclean spirit*—If there had been no reality in demoniacal possessions, our Lord would have scarcely appealed to a case of this kind here, to point out the real state of the Jewish people, and the desolation which was coming upon them. Had this been only a vulgar error, of the nonsense of which the learned scribes and the wise Pharisees must have been convinced, the case not being one in point, because not true, must have been treated by that very people with contempt for whose conviction it was alone designed.

2. *Seeking rest*—Or “refreshment.” Strange! a fallen corrupt spirit can have no rest but in the polluted human heart: The corruption of the one is suited to the pollution of the other, and thus like cleaves to like.

3. *Into my house*—The soul of that person from whom he had been expelled by the power of Christ, and out of which he was to have been kept by continual prayer, faith, and watchfulness.

4. *He findeth it empty*—“Unoccupied,” empty of the former inhabitant, and ready to receive a new one: Denoting a soul that has lost the life and power of godliness, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

5. *Swept, and garnished*—His affections and desires are no longer busied with the things of God, but gad about, like an idle person, among the vanities of a perishing world. “Swept,” from love, meekness, and all the fruits of the Spirit; and “garnished,” or adorned, decorated, with the vain showy trifles of folly and fashion. This may comprise also smart speeches, cunning repartees, &c., for which many who have lost the life of God are very remarkable.

6. *Seven other spirits more wicked*—“Seven demons,” as many as could occupy his soul, harassing it with pride, anger, self-will, lust, &c., and torturing the body with disease.

7. *The last state of that man is worse than the first*—His soul, before influenced by the Spirit of God, elated and expanded under its heavenly influences, becomes more capable of refinement in iniquity, as its powers are more capacious than formerly. Evil habits are formed and strengthened by relapses; and relapses are multiplied, and become more incurable, through new habits.

8. *So shall it be also unto this wicked generation*—And so it was: For they grew worse and worse, as if totally abandoned to diabolic influence; till at last the besom of destruction swept them and their privileges, national and religious, utterly away. What a terrible description of a state of apostasy is contained in these verses! May he who readeth understand!

“It is a solemn admonition to all who relapse into sin after the turning of their hearts to God. Those evils from which they have been wholly or at least partially saved, if suffered to resume their influence and dominion, through unwatchfulness, worldliness, the neglect of duty, and the alienation of the heart from communion with God, come back with sevenfold force, and take possession of a heart thus empty of God, and swept and garnished to receive evil, like a legion of evil spirits. Thus often every thing within ‘increases to more ungodliness.’ Blindness, insensibility, sensuality, pride, unbelief, fierce and

fiery tempers, and all other evils,—some the old residents of the heart, and others new and introduced ones,—assert their polluted and uncontrolled empire; the Holy Spirit is withdrawn; and the man, now under the full spiritual power of satan, proves that his 'last state is worse than the first.'—R. WATSON.

SECTION LXXVII.—CHRIST'S REAL KINDRED.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XII. 46—50; MARK III. 31—35;
LUKE VIII. 19—21; XI. 33—36.

No man, when he hath lighted a candle,¹ putteth *it* in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: Therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also *is* full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light,² as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light. While he yet talked to the people, behold, there came then unto him *his* mother and his brethren, and standing without, *they* sent unto him, calling him, *and* desiring to speak with *him*; (*But* the multitude sat about him;) and they could not come at him for the press. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee, *and* stand desiring to see *and* to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it; *and* whosoever shall do the will of God my Father³ which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

1. *No man, when he hath lighted a candle*—Our Lord intimates, that if he worked a miracle among such an obstinate people, who were determined to disbelieve every evidence of his Messiahship, he should act as a man who lighted a candle and then covered it with a bushel, which must prevent the accomplishment of the end for which it was lighted.

2. *The whole shall be full of light*—Or, "altogether enlightened;" that is, when the eye is perfect, it enlightens the whole body. Every object within the reach of the eye is as completely seen as if there

was an eye in every part. So the eye is to every part of the body what the lamp is to every part of the house. When the light of Christ dwells fully in the heart, it extends its influence to every thought, word, and action; and directs its possessor how he is to act in all places and circumstances. It is of the utmost importance to have the soul properly influenced by the wisdom that comes from above. The doctrine that is contrary to the gospel may say, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion;" but Christ shows that there can be no devotion without heavenly light. Igno-

rance is the mother of superstition ; but with this, the heavenly light has nothing to do.

“ Evidence no more produces conviction in matters where the affections have their strong aversions or desires, than light falling upon the eye produces vision. If vision is produced, there must be not only light, but a fit condition of the organ of seeing to receive it ; and so as to religious truth ; if bad passions, and carnal affections, and other evils sensual or mental, be suffered to predominate, conviction will be arrested or weakened, and the strongest light still leave us grovelling in darkness.”

—R. WATSON.

3. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, &c.*—Those are the best acknowledged relatives of Christ who are united to him by spiritual ties, and who are become one with him by the indwelling of his Spirit. We generally suppose that Christ's relatives must have shared much of his affectionate attention ; and doubtless they did : But here we find that whosoever does the will of God is equally esteemed by Christ, as his brother, sister, or even his virgin mother. What an encouragement for fervent attachment to God !

“ All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, owns them, converses freely with them, as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them : When he died, he left them rich legacies ; now he is in heaven, he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to do the Kinsman's part, nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.”—HENRY.

(1.) From various facts related in this chapter, we see the nature and design of

the revelation of God, and of all the ordinances and precepts contained in it : They are all calculated to do man good ; to improve his understanding, to soften and change his nature, that he may love his neighbour as himself. That religion that does not inculcate and produce humanity never came from heaven.

(2.) We have already seen what the sin against the Holy Ghost is : No soul that fears God can commit it. Perhaps it would be impossible for any but Jews to be guilty of it, and they only in the circumstances mentioned in the text ; and in such circumstances, it is impossible that any person should now be found.

“ Some do the will of the devil. He who lives in the practice of sin co-operates with him, resembles him, strives to please him, fulfils his wishes. Some do the will of men : They are entirely governed by others ; they receive the law from the opinions, maxims, and manners of their companions, superiors, relations. Some do their own will : They are as regardless of the authority of God, as if they were persuaded that his being and perfections were a fable ; they live without him in the world, never asking when they engage in any course of action, whether it will please or offend him, whether he has forbidden or enjoined it. But the Christian makes the will of God the grand, the only, rule of his life ; and every consideration induces him to say, ‘Not my will, but thine be done.’

“ As soon as we hear Christ claiming his disciples as his kindred, we look, (1.) For family-likeness ; and we have it. By claiming them as his kindred he, (2.) Confers honour upon them. (3.) He will love them. (4.) He will provide for them. (5.) He will keep up an intercourse with them. (6.) He will defend them.”

—JAY.

SECTION LXXVIII.—PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW XIII. 1—9 ; MARK IV. 1—9 ; LUKE VIII. 4—8.

THE same day¹ went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side, and began again to teach. And great multitudes were gathered

together *again*, and were come to him out of every city, so that he went into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake unto them, and taught them many things by parables,² and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, a sower went out to sow³ his seed: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But as soon as it was sprung up, when the sun was up, it was scorched and because it had no root, *and* lacked moisture, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. But other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and increased; and brought forth fruit, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to ear, let him hear.⁴

1. *The same day*—Our Lord scarcely ever appears to take any rest. He is incessant in his labours, and instant in season and out of season; and in this he has left all his successors in the ministry an example, that they should follow his steps: For he who wishes to save souls will find few opportunities to rest. As satan is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, the messenger of God should imitate his diligence, that he may counteract his work. The Gospels are journals of our Lord's life.

2. *And taught them many things by parables*—As parables occupy so distinguished a place in the Old and New Testaments, especially in the latter; and as the most important information relative to the nature of God, the economy of heaven, the state of separate spirits, the punishment of the wicked, the beatification of the godly, and the doctrines of salvation, is conveyed to mankind in parables, it becomes a matter of the utmost importance fully to understand their nature and their use.

Parable has been generally defined, "a comparison or similitude, in which one thing is compared with another; especially spiritual things with natural, by which means these spiritual things are better understood, and make a deeper impression on the attentive mind." This definition is pretty correct, especially in reference to the

parables of our blessed Lord. Or parable may be more generally defined, "a representation of any matter accommodated in the way of similitude to the real subject, in order to delineate its different parts with the greater force and perspicuity." This definition is applicable to parables in their more general and extended sense.

The method of conveying instruction by parables or moral fictions, sometimes in the form of similitudes, allegories, fables, or apologues, was very common, and in high esteem, among all ancient nations: But the Asiatics used it most frequently, and brought it to a higher degree of perfection than any other people on the earth. The despotic and tyrannical nature of their government led them often to make use of this method. Reproof and censure, which it might not on many occasions be expedient or safe to deliver in explicit language, and which might exasperate, when too plainly spoken, rather than correct, could be conveyed with delicacy and success under the disguise of parable. Even to the present time, information concerning grievances, oppressive acts of government, &c., is conveyed to the despotic Asiatic rulers under the guise of parable. An ancient instance of this we find in the reproof conveyed to the heart of David, by the prophet Nathan, in the parable of the poor man's ewe lamb.

Persons thus addressed, not perceiving

at first the relation, under this artificial form, to be directed against themselves, lost sight of their selfishness and prejudices, and were frequently induced, by their unsuspecting replies, to acknowledge the justice of the reprehension, and to pronounce the condemnation of their conduct, from their own mouth; as in the case of David above referred to. This, therefore, was one important use of this mode of instruction.

Though fable, similitude, and parable are nearly of the same nature, and have been indifferently applied to the same purposes, yet it may not be amiss to examine the meaning of each distinctly.

Similitude implies a proper resemblance between two subjects, the one well known, the other not at all, or less known; the leading properties of the one serving clearly to illustrate those of the other.

Fable is very nearly allied to similitude and parable, and has been applied exactly in the same way, to convey lessons of moral instruction by pleasing images and interesting dialogue.

But fable, in its nature, differs widely from the others. Every subject of inanimate creation may be employed by similitude and parable; but the grand subjects in fable are borrowed from the animate and rational creation only.

Though the former methods have been long, often, and successfully used to convey miscellaneous instruction, yet the parabolic method has been chiefly employed to illustrate divine subjects, and to convey instruction to the heart on those matters which concern the salvation of the soul.

The most important truths are by our Lord conveyed both to the disciples and to the multitude in parables; not that they might not be discovered, but that they might be sought earnestly after. In this, our Lord, who was well acquainted with all the springs and secret movements of human nature, consulted a well-known propensity of the mind, which leads a person always to esteem that most which is, or appears to be, a discovery of his own. Christ speaks a parable, and in it gives a clue by which we may discover the will of God. He that loves his soul's prosperity, takes up the thread, and, guided by it through all the labyrinth of error, he safely arrives at the fountain of truth.

It may be now necessary to inquire, for what purpose our blessed Lord used that mode of speech so frequently: As many have supposed from his own words, Matt. xiii. 11—13, that he addressed the people in parables merely that they might not understand. "To you," said he, addressing his disciples, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given: Therefore I speak to them in parables," &c. Now, to do justice to this passage, we must observe, that by "mysteries," here, we are to understand, not only things concerning the scheme of salvation which had not been as yet fully revealed, but also the prophetic declarations concerning the future state of the Christian church, as they are signified by the different parables mentioned in the succeeding parts of the chapter. It was not given to them to know the purport and design of these things. "They," said our Lord, "are gross of heart:" They are earthly and sensual, and do not improve the light they have received; so that, when many of them might have been preachers of this truth to others, they are found destitute of salvation themselves, notwithstanding the means of it were all within their power: "But," said he, "to you it is given:" Because I have appointed you, not only to be the first preachers of the gospel to sinners, but also the persons who shall transmit accounts of all these things to posterity. The knowledge of these mysteries, in the first instance, could be given only to a few; but when these faithfully wrote and published what they had heard and seen unto the world, then the science of salvation, being fully revealed, was addressed to all.

From verse 17 of the same chapter we learn, that "many prophets and righteous men had desired to see and hear these things," but had not that privilege: "To them it was not given:" Not because God designed to exclude them from salvation, but because He who knew all things knew either that they were not proper persons, or that that was not the proper time; for the choice of the persons by whom, and the choice of the time in which, it is most proper to reveal divine things, must ever rest with the all-wise God.

But it is not intimated, that our Lord spoke to the Jews in parables that they

might not understand: The very reverse, I think, is plainly intended. It was to lead them, by a familiar and appropriate mode of instruction, into the knowledge of God and the interests of their souls. "I speak to them," said he, "in parables," that is, natural representations of spiritual truths, that they might be allured to inquire, and so find out the spirit which was hidden under the letter. "Because," said he, "seeing" the miracles which I have wrought, "they see not," that is, the end for which I have wrought them; and "hearing" my doctrines, "they hear not," so as to profit by what is spoken; "neither do they understand," they do not lay their hearts to it, so as to consider it with that deep attention which such momentous truths require. But that they might not continue in their ignorance, and die in their sins, he adds parable to parable, to make the whole science of salvation as plain and intelligible as possible. Is not this obviously our Lord's meaning? Who that is not most miserably warped and begloomed by some Jewish exclusive system of salvation, can suppose that the wise, the holy, the benevolent Christ, would employ his time in speaking enigmatically to the people, on purpose that they might not understand what was spoken? Could the God of truth and sincerity act thus? If he had designed that they should continue in darkness, he might have saved his time and

labour, and not spoken at all, which would have as effectually answered the same purpose, namely, that of leaving them in destructive ignorance, as his speaking in such a way as should render his meaning incomprehensible.

On the whole I conclude, that the grand object of parabolical writing is not to conceal the truth, but to convey information to the hearts of the hearers in the most concise, appropriate, impressive, and effectual manner.

In preaching on parables and similitudes, great care should be taken to discover their object and design, and those grand and leading circumstances by which the author illustrates his subject. There are few, if any, parables whose every circumstance was designed to apply to the subject in reference to which they were proposed.

3. *A sower went out to sow*—Under the parable of the sower, our Lord intimates, (1.) That of all the multitudes then attending his ministry, few would bring forth fruit to perfection. And (2.) That this would be a general case in preaching the gospel among men.

4. *He that hath ears to ear, &c.*—Let every person, who feels the necessity of being instructed in the things which concern his soul's welfare pay, attention to what is spoken, and he shall become wise unto salvation.

SECTION LXXIX.—REASONS FOR TEACHING BY PARABLES.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW XIII. 10—17; MARK IV. 10—12; LUKE VIII. 9, 10.

AND when he was alone, the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered, and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries¹ of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: But whosoever hath not,² from him shall be taken away even that he hath. But unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables:³ That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. And in them is fulfilled⁴ the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By

hearing ye shall hear,⁵ and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross,⁶ and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed;⁷ lest at any time they should see⁸ with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes,⁹ for they see: And your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

1. *It is given unto you to know the mysteries, &c.*—By mysteries, here, we may understand not only things concerning the scheme of salvation, which had not yet been revealed; but also the prophetic declarations concerning the future state of the Christian church, expressed in the ensuing parables. "It is not given to them" to know the purport and design of these things; they are gross of heart, earthly, and sensual, and do not improve the light they have received. See Section lxxviii., page 178.

"Here the disciples plainly perceived, that he did not intend fully to explain himself indiscriminately to his hearers; which led them to ask the reason of this new practice. Connecting this circumstance with what he had a little before said of the rapidity with which that 'generation,' the body of the people who had attended on his ministry, had been becoming of a worse disposition, more opposed to his doctrine, and more at enmity with his person and work, we see the force of the reason he assigns for not speaking to them so clearly as formerly on subjects for which they had less reverence, and which only provoked in many the enmity of the carnal heart. To the disciples therefore 'it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,' those doctrines which had been kept secret from former ages, but which Christ was now appointed to reveal; but 'to the others it was not given.' Why? 'Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, nor understand.' They had seen the greatest miracles, yet, as though they had not seen them, remained unmoved and unconvinced; and they had heard the doctrines of Christ, and were as

though they had not heard them; they had not only paid no attention to understand them fully, but, as far as they knew them, they had rejected them; their case therefore had become hopeless, and they were now, by a righteous decision, grounded upon a principle of the moral government of God, deprived of the advantages they had abused, at least in part, and preparatory to their total dereliction. That principle is laid down in verse 12."—R. WATSON.

2. *But whosoever hath not, &c.*—This seems to have been a proverbial mode of speech, which our Lord here uses to inform his disciples, that he who does not improve the first operations of grace, howsoever small, is in danger of losing not only all the possible product, but even the principal; for God delights to heap benefits on those who properly improve them.

"This was accomplished in the unbelieving Jews, whose means of illumination, through his teaching, Christ now began to diminish, and from which they were at length entirely shut out. Thus they became a standing warning to all in future time, to whom the offers of salvation by Christ should be sent; for whoever despises or neglects such advantages, shall either finally see them withdrawn, or be suffered to sink into an obdurate and blinded state of mind, which shall render them all inefficacious."—R. WATSON.

3. *All these things are done in parables*—On this account, namely, to lead them into a proper knowledge of God. See Section lxxviii., page 179.

4. *In them is fulfilled*—"Is again fulfilled." The evangelist means, that as these words were fulfilled in the Jews, in

the time of the prophet Isaiah, so they are now again fulfilled in these their posterity, who exactly copy their fathers' example. These awful words may be again fulfilled in us, if we take not warning by the things which these disobedient people have suffered.

5. *By hearing ye shall hear*—Jesus Christ shall be sent to you, his miracles ye shall fully see, and his doctrines ye shall distinctly hear; but God will not force you to receive the salvation which is offered.

6. *Heart is waxed gross*—Is become fat; inattentive, stupid, insensible. "They hear heavily with their ears;" are half asleep while the salvation of God is preached unto them.

7. *Their eyes they have closed*—Totally and obstinately resisted the truth of God, and shut their eyes against the light.

8. *Lest they should see, &c.*—Lest they should see their lost estate, and be obliged to turn unto God, and seek his salvation. His state is truly deplorable who is sick unto death, and yet is afraid of being cured. The fault is here totally in the people, and not at all in that God whose name is Mercy, and whose nature is Love.

9. *But blessed are your eyes*—Ye improve the light which God has given you; and you receive an increase of heavenly wisdom by every miracle and by every sermon.

SECTION LXXX.—CHRIST EXPLAINS THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XIII. 18—23; MARK IV. 10, 13—24;
LUKE VIII. 11—18.

THEY that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable, saying, What might this parable be? And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The sower soweth the word. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom,¹ and understandeth *it* not, then immediately, lest they should believe and be saved, cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that, the word, that was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he² that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; immediately receiveth it with gladness: Yet hath he not root in himself,³ but dureth for a while; for a while believeth, and afterward in time of temptation falleth away; for when affliction, when tribulation, or persecution, ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and when he hath heard goeth forth, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and pleasures of *this* life, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word,⁴ and he becometh unfruitful. But he that receiveth seed into the good ground,⁵ is he that heareth⁶ the word, and understandeth *it*; ⁷ and receiveth *it* in an honest and good heart, and having heard the word, keepeth *it*, and which also beareth fruit,⁸

and bringeth *it* forth with patience, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.

1. *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom*—A careless, inattentive hearer is compared to the “way-side;” his heart is an open road, where evil affections, and foolish and hurtful desires, continually pass and repass without either notice or restraint; “a heart where satan has,” as one terms it, “ingress, egress, regress, and progress; in a word, the devil’s thoroughfare.”

2. *But he that receiveth the word into stony places, is he*—That is, is a fit emblem of that man who, hearing the gospel, is affected with its beauty and excellency, and immediately receiveth it with joy; is glad to hear what God has done to make man happy.

3. *Yet hath he not root in himself*—His soul is not deeply convinced of its guilt and depravity; the fallow ground is not properly ploughed up, nor the rock broken. When persecution, &c., ariseth, which he did not expect, he is soon stumbled; seeks some pretext to abandon both the doctrine and followers of Christ. Having not felt his own sore, and the plague of his heart, he has not properly discovered that this salvation is the only remedy for his soul: Thus he has no motive in his heart strong enough to counteract the outward scandal of the cross; so he endureth only for the time in which there is no difficulty to encounter; no cross to bear.

4. *Choke the word*—Or, “Together choke the word;” meaning, either that these grow up together with the word, overtop, and choke it; or that these united together, namely, carking worldly cares, with the delusive hopes and promises of riches, cause the man to abandon the great concerns of his soul, and seek, in their place, what he shall eat, drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed. Dreadful stupidity of man, thus to barter spiritual for temporal good; a heavenly inheritance for an earthly portion! The seed of the kingdom can never produce much fruit in any heart, till the thorns and thistles of vicious affections and impure desires be plucked up by the roots and burned.

“They fall by slow degrees, and by an enemy more subtle in its approaches than

persecution,—by the cares of the world, its distracting anxieties, and the deceitfulness of riches. These awaken the craving spirit, which longs to possess wealth, either to spend in luxury, or to hoard for security, and so ‘choke the word,’ and he becometh unfruitful: For in a mind so intent upon earthly things, so anxious to escape the measure of affliction which divine providence may in its wisdom appoint, and to attain a degree of prosperity and distinction, which it may, in the exercise of the same wisdom and goodness, design to withhold, the vitality of every gracious principle must be languid; faith, hope, and spirituality, all rapidly lose their vigour and influence; prayer becomes distracted and formal; intercourse with God, which can only be maintained by a calm, watchful, and subjected spirit, is lost; and moral dearth is the necessary result.”—R. WATSON.

5. *Good ground*—That which had depth of mould, was well ploughed, and well weeded.

6. *Is he that heareth*—Who diligently attends the ministry of the word.

7. *And understandeth it*—Lays the subject to heart, deeply weighing its nature, design, and importance.

8. *Which also beareth fruit*—His fruitfulness being an almost necessary consequence of his thus laying the divine message to heart. Let it be observed, that to hear, to understand, and to bring forth fruit, are the three grand evidences of a genuine believer. He who does not hear the word of wisdom cannot understand what makes for his peace; and he who does not understand what the gospel requires him to be and to perform, cannot bring forth fruit; and he who is not fruitful, very fruitful, cannot be a disciple of Christ; and he who is not Christ’s disciple cannot enter into the kingdom of God. From the different portions of fruit produced by the good ground, a hundred, sixty, and thirty, we may learn that all sound believers are not equally fruitful; all hear, understand, and bring forth fruit, but not in the same degrees, occasioned, partly, by their situation and circumstances not allowing them such extensive opportunities of

receiving and doing good; and partly by lack of mental capacity; for every mind is not equally improvable.

Let it be farther observed, that the unfruitfulness of the different lands was not owing to bad seed, or an unskilful sower; the same sower sows the same seed in all, and with the same gracious design; but it is unfruitful in many because they are careless, inattentive, and worldly-minded. "But is not the ground naturally bad in every heart?" Undoubtedly. "And can any but God make it good?" None. But it is your

business, when you hear of the justice and mercy of God, to implore him to work in you that which is pleasing in his sight. No man shall be condemned because he did not change his own heart, but because he did not cry to God to change it, who gave him his Holy Spirit for this very purpose, and which he, by his worldly-mindedness and impiety, quenched. "Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear:" And may the Lord save the reader from an impenitent and unfruitful heart!

SECTION LXXXI.—PARABLE OF THE TARES, AND ITS EXPLANATION.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW XIII. 24—30, 36—43.

ANOTHER parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven¹ is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:² But while men slept,³ his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.⁴ So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow⁵ good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.⁶ The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?⁷ But he said, Nay;⁸ lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together⁹ until the harvest: And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: But gather the wheat into my barn. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: And his disciples came¹⁰ unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.¹¹ He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

1. *The kingdom of heaven*—God's method of managing the affairs of the world, and the concerns of his church.

2. *Is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field*—In general, the world may be termed the field of God; and, in particular, those who profess to believe in God through Christ are his field, or farm; among whom God sows nothing but the pure unadulterated word of his truth.

3. *But while men slept*—"Strange as this may appear, it is still literally done in the east. See that lurking villain, watching for the time when his neighbour shall plough his field; he carefully marks the period when the work has been finished, and goes in the night following, and casts in the pig-paddy; this being of a rapid growth springs up before the good seed, and scatters itself before the others can be reaped, so that the poor owner of the field will be for years before he can get rid of the troublesome weed."—J. ROBERTS.

When the professors were lukewarm, and the pastors indolent; "his enemy came and sowed tares," degenerate or bastard wheat. The righteous and the wicked are often mingled in the visible church. Every Christian society, how pure soever its principles may be, has its bastard wheat; those who bear a resemblance to the good, but whose hearts are not right with God. He who sows this bastard wheat among God's people is here styled "God's enemy;" and he may be considered also as a sower of them who permits them to be sown and to spring up through his negligence. Woe to the indolent pastors, who permit the souls under their care to be corrupted by error and sin! Christ seems to refer, first, to the origin of evil. God sowed good seed in his field; made man in his own image and likeness: But the enemy, the devil, corrupted this good seed, and caused it to degenerate. Secondly, he seems to refer to the state of the Jewish people: God had sowed them, at first, wholly a right seed; but now they were become utterly degenerate, and about to be plucked up and destroyed by the Roman armies, which were the angels or messengers of God's justice, whom he had commissioned to sweep these rebellious people from the face of the land. Thirdly, he seems to refer also to the state in which the world shall be

found, when he comes to judge it. The righteous and the wicked shall be permitted to grow together, till God comes to make a full and final separation.

4. *When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also*—Satan has a shoot of iniquity for every shoot of grace; and, when God revives his work, satan revives his also. No marvel, therefore, if we find scandals arising suddenly to discredit a work of grace, where God has begun to pour out his Spirit.

5. *So the servants of the householder said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow*—A faithful and vigilant minister of Christ fails not to discover the evil, to lament it, and to address himself to God by prayer, in order to find out the cause of it, and to receive from him proper information how to behave on this occasion.

6. *An enemy hath done this*—It is the interest of satan to introduce hypocrites and wicked persons into religious societies, in order to discredit the work of God, and to favour his own designs.

7. *Will thou then that we go and gather them up?*—A zeal which is rash and precipitate is as much to be feared as the total lack of strict discipline.

8. *But he said, Nay*—God judges quite otherwise than men, of this mixture of good and evil in the world; he knows the good which he intends to produce from it, and how far his patience towards the wicked should extend, in order to their conversion, or the farther sanctification of the righteous. Men often persecute a true Christian, while they intend only to prosecute an impious person.

9. *Let both grow together*—Though every minister of God should separate from the church of Christ every incorrigible sinner, yet he should proceed no farther: The man is not to be persecuted in his body or goods, because he is not sound in the faith; God tolerates him; so should men. False doctrines are against God; he alone is the judge and punisher of them; man has no right to interfere in this matter. They who burnt Vanini for atheism usurped the seat of judgment, and thus proved themselves to be not less a diabolical seed than the person they thus, without God's leave, hurried into eternity. Mary, queen of England, of execrable memory, and the in-

quisitorial tormentors she employed, were all of this diabolical sowing.

10. *Jesus went into the house: And his disciples came*—Circumstances of this kind should not pass unnoticed; they are instructive and important. Those who attend only to the public preaching of the gospel of God are not likely to understand fully the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. To understand clearly the purport of the divine message, a man must come to God by frequent, fervent, secret prayer. It is thus that the word of God sinks into the heart, is watered, and brings forth much fruit.

11. *Declare, "explain," unto us the parable of the tares of the field*—To what has already been spoken on this parable, the following general exposition may be deemed a necessary appendage:—

I. "What is the cause of evil in the world?"

(1.) We must allow that God, who is infinite in holiness, purity, and goodness, could not have done it. Nothing can produce what is not in itself. This is a maxim which every man subscribes to: God then could not have produced sin, forasmuch as his nature is infinite goodness and holiness. He made man at first in his own image, a transcript of his own purity; and, since sin entered into the world, he has done every thing consistent with his own perfections, and the freedom of the human mind, to drive it out, and to make and keep man holy.

(2.) After a thousand volumes are written on the origin of evil, we shall just know as much of it as Christ has told us here: "An enemy hath done it;" and this enemy is the devil. (i.) This enemy is represented as a deceitful enemy: A friend in appearance, soliciting to sin, by pleasure, honour, riches, &c. (ii.) A vigilant enemy. While men sleep he watches. (iii.) A hidden or secret enemy. After having sown his seed, he disappears. Did he appear as himself, few would receive solicitations to sin; but he is seldom discovered in evil thoughts, unholy desires, flattering discourses, bad books, &c.

II. "Why was evil permitted to enter into the world?"

(1.) There are doubtless sufficient reasons in the divine mind for its permission;

which, connected with his infinite essence, and extending to eternity, are not only unfathomable by us, but also, from their nature, incommunicable to men.

(2.) But it may be justly said, that hereby many attributes of the divine nature become manifest, which otherwise could not have been known; such as mercy, compassion, long-suffering, &c.; all of which endear the Deity to men, and perfect the felicity of those who are saved.

III. "But why does he suffer this mixture of the good and bad seed now?"

(1.) Because of the necessary dependence of one part of the creation on the other. Were the wicked all rooted up, society must fall; the earth be nearly desolated; noxious things greatly multiplied; and the small remnant of the godly, not being able to stand against the onsets of wild beasts, &c., must soon be extirpated; and then adieu to the economy of grace!

(2.) Did not the wicked exist, there would be no room for the exercise of many of the graces of the Spirit, on which our spiritual perfection greatly depends.

(3.) Nor could the grace of God be so manifest in supporting and saving the righteous; and consequently could not have that honour which now it justly claims.

(4.) Were not this evil tolerated, how could the wicked be converted? The bastard wheat, by being transplanted to a better soil, may become good wheat; so sinners may be engrafted in Christ, and become sons of God through faith in his name; for the long-suffering of God leads multitudes to repentance.

IV. Observe the end of the present state of things:—

(1.) The wicked shall be punished, and the righteous rewarded. The wicked are termed bastard-wheat, the "children of the wicked one," the very seed of the serpent. Observe the place in which the wicked shall be punished,—a furnace. The instrument of this punishment,—fire. This is an allusion to a punishment inflicted only on those supposed to be the very worst of criminals. They were cast into a "burning fiery furnace." The effect of it,—despair; "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

(2.) Observe the character and state of the righteous: (i.) They are the "child-

dren of the kingdom," a seed of God's sowing. (ii.) As to their persons, they shall be like the sun. (iii.) The place of their felicity shall be the "kingdom of heaven:" And, (iv.) The object of it, God in the relation of Father.

SECTION LXXXII.—THE GROWING SEED, THE MUSTARD SEED, THE LEAVEN.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW XIII. 31—35; MARK IV. 26—34.

AND he said, So is the kingdom of God,¹ as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day,² 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. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle,³ because the harvest is come. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? ⁴ or with what comparison shall we compare it? *And* another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed,⁵ which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, and shooteth out great branches; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof, *and* under the shadow of it. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,⁶ which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables,⁷ and with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*.⁸ But without a parable spake he not unto them: And when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples: ⁹ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

1. *So is the kingdom of God*—The kingdom of God, which is generated in the soul by the word of life, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is first very small; there is only a "blade;" but this is full of promise; for a good blade shows there is a good seed at bottom, and that the soil in which it is sown is good also. "Then the ear:" The strong stalk grows up, and the ear is formed at the top; the faith and love of the believing soul increase abundantly; it is justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ; it has the ear which is

shortly to be filled with the ripe grain, the outlines of the whole image of God. "Then the full corn." The soul is purified from all unrighteousness; and, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, it is made a partaker of the divine nature, and is filled with all the fulness of God.

2. *Should sleep, and rise night and day*—"I see no necessity of inquiring here, how Christ may be said to sleep and rise day and night; Christ being like to this husbandman only in sowing and reaping of his seed."—WHITBY.

3. *He putteth in the sickle*—It has been supposed that our Lord intimates here, that, as soon as a soul is made completely holy, it is taken into the kingdom of God. But certainly the parable does not say so. When the corn is ripe, it is reaped for the benefit of him who sowed it; for it can be of little or no use till it be ripe: So when a soul is saved from all sin, it is capable of being fully employed in the work of the Lord: It is then, and not till then, fully fitted for the Master's use. God saves men to the uttermost, that they may here perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his name. To take them away the moment they are capable of detag this, would be, so far, to deprive the world and the church of the manifestation of the glory of his grace.

4. *Wherunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?*—How amiable is this carefulness of Jesus! How instructive to the preachers of his word? He is not solicitous to seek fine turns of eloquence to charm the minds of his auditors, nor to draw such descriptions and comparisons as may surprise them: But studies only to make himself understood; to instruct to advantage; to give true ideas of faith and holiness; and to find out such expressions as may render necessary truths easy and intelligible to the meanest capacities. The very wisdom of God seems to be at a loss to find out expressions low enough for the slow apprehensions of men. How dull and stupid is the creature! How wise and good the Creator! And how foolish the preacher who uses fine and hard words in his preaching, which, though admired by the shallow, convey no instruction to the multitude!

5. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed*—This parable is a representation of the progress of the gospel in the world; and of the growth of grace in the soul. That grace which leads the soul to the fulness of glory may begin, and often does, in a single good desire; a wish to escape hell, or a desire to enjoy God in heaven.

6. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven*—As the property of leaven is to change, or assimilate to its own nature, the meal or dough with which it is mixed, so the property of the grace of Christ is to change the whole soul into its own likeness; and God intends that this principle should continue in the soul till all is leavened, till

the whole bear the image of the heavenly, as it before bore the image of the earthly. Both these parables are prophetic, and were intended to show, principally, how, from very small beginnings, the gospel of Christ should pervade all the nations of the world, and fill them with righteousness and true holiness.

“The former parable was designed to illustrate the public and visible growth of Christ's religion; this, its secret and powerful operation in the soul of man, and in the moral state of society. Its influence is invisible, often slow; but it exerts a secret activity, conveying its own properties progressively, until, like the measures of meal, the whole mass is leavened. This must become matter of personal experience, that no principle of action, no affection of the soul, no temper, no thought, word, or action shall escape that influence of the gospel, the effect of which, when not wilfully counteracted, is to assimilate every thing to its own charity and purity. In the world the process, from the vastness of the mass, will be slow; and yet, what reflecting mind can fail to remark with joy, that, wherever the great truths of our divine religion are fully and faithfully preached, how certainly, and often indeed rapidly, do great moral changes in the state of society follow? a higher standard of judging as to right and wrong, a stricter regard to justice, a corrected state of morals, a more liberal benevolence, kinder feelings, manliness of intellect, and an ameliorated state of the social affections. Let this encourage the exertions of the disciples of Christ. The elements of these mighty changes are not often brought into the calculations of the philosopher or the statesman; but they are silently placed amidst the thoughts and consciences of men, and exert there a growing influence. Far off may be the desirable consummation; but the leaven is silently at work; and the vast mass of the human race shall be ultimately brought under its influence.”

—R. WATSON.

7. *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables*—Christ descends from divine mysteries to parables, in order to excite us to raise our minds, from and through natural things, to the great God, and the operations of his grace and Spirit.

Divine things cannot be taught to man but through the medium of earthly things. If God should speak to us in that language which is peculiar to heaven, clothing those ideas which angelic minds form, how little should we comprehend of the things thus described! How great is our privilege in being thus taught! Heavenly things, in the parables of Christ, assume to themselves a body, and thus render themselves palpable.

8. *As they were able to hear*—Or to “understand,” always suiting his teaching to the capacities of his hearers. I have always found that preacher most useful, who could adapt his phrase to that of the people to whom he preached. Studying

different dialects, and forms of speech, among the common people, is a more difficult and a more useful work than the study of dead languages. The one a man should do, and the other he need not leave undone.

9. *He expounded all things to his disciples*—That they might be capable of instructing others. Outside hearers, those who do not come into close fellowship with the true disciples of Christ, have seldom more than a superficial knowledge of divine things. In the fellowship of the saints, where Jesus the Teacher is always to be found, every thing is made plain; for “the secret of the Lord is with them who fear him.”

SECTION LXXXIII.—THE HID TREASURE, THE PEARL MERCHANT, THE DRAG-NET.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW XIII. 44—53.

AGAIN, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field;¹ the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:² Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net,³ that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?⁴ They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe⁵ *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old. And it came to pass *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field*—Our Lord's meaning seems to be this: “The kingdom of heaven,” the salvation provided by the gospel, “is like a treasure,” something of inestimable worth, “hidden in a field;” it is a rich mine, the veins of which run in all

directions in the sacred scriptures; therefore, the field must be dug up, the records of salvation diligently and carefully turned over, and searched. “Which, when a man hath found,” when a sinner is convinced that the promise of life eternal is to him, “he kept secret,” pondered the matter

deeply in his heart; he examines the preciousness of the treasure, and counts the cost of purchase. "For joy thereof:" Finding that this salvation is just what his needy soul requires, and what will make him presently and eternally happy, "went and sold all that he had," renounces his sins, abandons his evil companions, and relinquishes all hope of salvation through his own righteousness; "and purchased that field;" not merely bought the book for the sake of the salvation it described, but, by the blood of the covenant, buys gold tried in the fire, white raiment, &c.; in a word, pardon and purity, which he receives from God for the sake of Jesus. We should consider the salvation of God, (1.) As our only treasure, and value it above all the riches in the world. (2.) Search for it in the scriptures, till we fully understand its worth and excellence. (3.) Deeply ponder it in the secret of our souls. (4.) Part with all we have in order to get it. (5.) Place our whole joy and felicity in it: And, (6.) Be always convinced that it must be bought, and that no price is accepted for it but the blood of the covenant; and the sufferings and death of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. *A merchant man, seeking goodly pearls*—The meaning of this parable is the same with the other; and both were spoken to impress more forcibly this great truth on the souls of the people: Eternal salvation from sin and its consequences is the supreme good of man, should be sought after above all things, and prized beyond all that God has made. Those merchants who compass sea and land for temporal gain, condemn the slothfulness of the majority of those called Christians, who, though they confess that this salvation is the most certain and the most excellent of all treasures, yet seek worldly possessions in preference to it! Alas for him who expects to find any thing more amiable than God, more worthy to fill his heart, and more capable of making him happy!

3. *Is like unto a net*—By the "net" may be understood the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, which keeps drawing men into the profession of Christianity, and into the fellowship of the visible church of Christ. By the "sea" may be represented that abyss of sin, error, ignorance,

and wickedness in which men live, and out of which they are drawn, by the truth and Spirit of God, who cordially close in with the offers of salvation made to them in the preaching of the gospel. By "drawing to shore," may be represented the consummation of all things, when a proper distinction shall be made between those who served God, and those who served him not; for many shall doubtless be found who shall bear the name without the nature of Christ. By "picking out the good, and throwing away the bad," is meant that separation which God shall make between false and true professors, casting the former into hell, and bringing the latter to heaven.

4. *Have ye understood all these things?*—Divine truths must not be lightly passed over. Our Lord's question here shows them to be matters of the utmost weight and importance; and that they should be considered again and again, till they be thoroughly understood.

5. *Every scribe—Minister of Christ;* "who is instructed," taught of God; "in the kingdom of heaven," in the mysteries of the gospel of Christ; "out of his treasury," his granary or store-house; "things new and old," a Jewish phrase for "great plenty." A small degree of knowledge is not sufficient for a preacher of the gospel. The sacred writings should be his treasure, and he should properly understand them. His knowledge does not consist in being furnished with a great variety of human learning; though of this he should acquire as much as he can; but his knowledge consists in being well instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of heaven, and the art of conducting men thither. Again: It is not enough for a man to have these advantages in possession; he must bring them forth, and distribute them abroad. A good pastor will not, like a miser, keep these things to himself to please his fancy; nor, like a merchant, traffic with them, to enrich himself; but, like a bountiful father or householder, distribute them with a liberal though judicious hand, for the comfort and support of the whole heavenly family. A preacher whose mind is well stored with divine truths, and who has a sound judgment, will suit his discourses to the circumstances and states of his hearers. He who preaches the same sermon to every congreg-

gation, gives the fullest proof that, however well he may speak, he is not a "scribe" who is "instructed in the kingdom of heaven." Some have thought that "old and new things" here, which imply the produce of the past and the produce of the present year, may also refer to the old and new covenants, a proper knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures, and of the doctrines of Christ as contained in the New.

No man can properly understand the Old Testament but through the medium of the New, nor can the New be so forcibly or successfully applied to the conscience of a sinner as through the medium of the Old. The law is still a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ; by it is the knowledge of sin, and, without it, there can be no conviction; where it ends, the gospel begins, as by the gospel alone is salvation from sin.

SECTION LXXXIV.—CHRIST STILLS THE TEMPEST.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW VIII. 18—27; MARK IV. 35—41;
LUKE VIII. 22—25; IX. 57—62.

AND the same day, when the even was come, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he went into a ship with his disciples: And he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Lord *and* Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.¹ And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes,² and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay *his* head. And he said unto another of his disciples,³ Follow me: But he said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead:⁴ But go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him: And they launched forth. And there were also with him other little ships. And behold, as they sailed, he fell asleep: And there came down a great storm of wind on the lake; and there arose a great tempest in the sea,⁵ insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full: And they were in jeopardy. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, carest thou not that we perish? Lord, save us: We perish.⁶ And he saith unto them, Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?⁷ Where is your faith? How is it that ye have no faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds, and the raging of the water, and said unto the

sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁸ But the men marvelled,⁹ and they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this!¹⁰ For he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him?

1. *I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*—A man who is not illuminated by the Spirit of God thinks himself capable of any thing: He alone who is divinely taught knows he can do nothing but through Christ strengthening him.

2. *The foxes have holes, &c.*—Reader, art thou a poor man? and dost thou fear God? Then, what comfort must thou derive from the thought, that thou so nearly resemblest the Lord Jesus! But how unlike is the rich man, who is the votary of pleasure and slave of sin, to this heavenly pattern! As our Lord was now showing forth his eternal Divinity in the miracles he wrought, he seems studious to prove to them the certainty of his incarnation, because on this depended the atonement for sin. Indeed, our Lord seems more intent on giving the proofs of his humanity, than of his Divinity, the latter being necessarily manifested by the miracles which he was continually working.

3. *Another of his disciples*—The children of Adam are always in extremes; some will rush into the ministry of the gospel without a call, others will delay long after they are called; the middle way is the only safe one: Not to move a finger in the work till the call be given, and not to delay a moment after.

4. *Let the dead bury their dead*—It was usual for the Jews to consider a man as dead who had departed from the precepts of the law; and, on this ground, every transgressor was reputed a dead man. Our Lord's saying, being in common use, had nothing difficult in it to a Jew. Natural death is the separation of the body and soul; spiritual death, the separation of God and the soul: Men who live in sin are dead to God. Leave the spiritually dead to bury their natural dead. All the common offices of life may be performed by any person; to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God is granted but to a few, and to these only by an especial call; these should immediately abandon worldly

concerns and employments, and give themselves wholly up to the work of the ministry.

5. *Arose a great tempest in the sea*—Probably excited by satan, the prince of the power of the air, who, having got the Author and all the preachers of the gospel together in a small vessel, thought by drowning it to defeat the purposes of God, and thus to prevent the salvation of a ruined world. What a noble opportunity must this have appeared to the enemy of the human race!

6. *Lord, save us: We perish*—One advantage of trials is, to make us know our weakness, so as to oblige us to have recourse to God by faith in Christ. It is by faith alone that we may be said to approach him; by love we are united to him, and by prayer we awake him. All good perishes in us without Christ: Without his grace, there is not so much as one moment in which we are not in danger of utter ruin! How proper, then, is this short prayer for us, and how familiar should it be to us! Taken in the extensive Christian sense, it is exceedingly expressive; it comprehends all the power of our Lord's might, all the merit of his atonement, and all the depth of our misery and danger.

7. *Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?*—Faith is ever bold; incredulity always timid. When faith falls in temptation, there is the utmost danger of shipwreck. "Lord, increase our faith!" is a necessary prayer for all who desire to be saved.

8. *There was a great calm*—One word of Christ can change the face of nature; one word of his can restore calm and peace to the most troubled and disconsolate soul. Prayer and faith, if sincere, shall be heard, though they may be weak: (1.) That our imperfections may not hinder us from praying to God: (2.) That we may be persuaded it is not our merits which make our prayers effectual: (3.) That we may offer them up with great humility: And,

(4.) That we may be fully united to Christ, without which union there is no salvation. There was at first a great agitation; then a great calm. Thus God ever proportions the comfort to the affliction.

“So that it was in the height of the tempest, amidst the very rage and fury of the elements, and in the extremity of danger, that he issued his authoritative command, ‘and there was a great calm.’ The very simplicity of the narrative heightens the sublimity of the whole scene as it passes before us: The suddenness and fury of the storm; the vessel labouring among the overwhelming waves; the terror of the disciples; the calm repose of Jesus, asleep

amidst all this uproar; the majesty of his action,—‘he arose and rebuked the wind’ and the sea; the immediate effect,—‘there was a great calm!’”—R. WATSON.

9. *The men marvelled*.—Every part of the creation (man excepted) hears and obeys the Creator’s voice. Sinners have an ear for the world, the devil, and the flesh: Till this ear is shut, God’s voice is not discerned; for when it is shut to its enemies, it is open to its friends.

10. *What manner of man is this*.—“How great is this person!” Here was God fully manifest; but it was in the flesh, there were the hidings of his power.

SECTION LXXXV.—CHRIST HEALS TWO DEMONIACS.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW VIII. 28—34; IX. 1; MARK V. 1—21;
LUKE VIII. 26—40.

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes, *and* Gergesenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth out of the ship to land, there met him, out of the city, two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. *One of them* had devils a long time. And no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains,¹ and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: Neither could any *man* tame him: And he was driven of the devil into the wilderness: And he ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.² But when *they* saw Jesus afar off, *they* ran, and fell down before him, and worshipped him,³ and cried with a loud voice, saying, What have we to do with thee,⁴ Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? art thou become hither to torment us before the time?⁵ I beseech thee, I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name *is* Legion: For we are many.⁶ Because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him much, that he would not send them away out of the country,⁷ *and* that he would not command them to go out into the

deep. Now there was there, a good way off from them, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine⁸ feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away⁹ into the herd of swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave, and said unto them, Go. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: And, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place¹⁰ into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and perished in the waters. And when they that fed the swine saw what was done, they fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing in the city, and in the country, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out¹¹ to meet Jesus, and to see what it was that was done. And they came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, and saw him *that* had the legion, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: ¹² And they were afraid. And they that saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed, and *also* concerning the swine. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them, *and* out of their coasts; for they were taken with great fear: And he went up into the ship. And when he was come into the ship, the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, *and* to thy friends, and tell them how great things God hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and went his way, and began to publish throughout the whole city, and in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him: And all *men* did marvel. And he entered into a ship, and passed over again unto the other side, *and* much people gathered unto him, and *gladly* received him: For they were all waiting for him: And he was nigh unto the sea.

1. *With fetters and chains*—His strength, it appears, was supernatural, no kind of chains being strong enough to confine him. With several, this man would have passed for an outrageous madman, and diabolic influence be entirely left out of the question; but it is the prerogative of the inspired penman only, to enter into the nature and causes of things; and how strange is it, that because men cannot see as far as the Spirit of God does, therefore, they deny his testimony! "There was no devil; there can be none." Why? "Because we have never seen one, and we think the

doctrine absurd." Excellent reason! And do you 'think that any man who conscientiously believes his Bible will give any credit to you? Men sent from God to bear witness to the truth tell us, there were demoniacs in their time; you say, "No, they were only diseases." Whom shall we credit? The men sent from God, or you?

2. *Crying, and cutting himself with stones*—In this person's case we see a specimen of what satan could do in all the wicked, if God should permit him; but even the devil himself has his chain; and he

who often binds others is always bound himself.

3. *Worshipped him*—"Did him homage;" compelled thereto by the power of God. How humiliating to satan, thus to be obliged to acknowledge the superiority of Christ!

4. *What have we to do with thee?*—"What is it to us, and to thee?" Which perhaps might be understood to imply their disclaiming any design to interfere with the work of Christ, and that he should not therefore meddle with them: For it appears they exceedingly dreaded his power.

5. *Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*—From this it appears that a greater degree of punishment awaited these demons than they at that time endured; and that they knew there was a time determined by the Divine Judge, when they should be sent into greater torments.

6. *Legion: For we are many*—Could a disease have spoken so? "No, there was no devil in the case; the man spoke according to the prejudice of his countrymen." And do you think that the Spirit of God could employ himself in retalling such ridiculous and nonsensical prejudices? "But the evangelist gives these as this madman's words; and it was necessary that, as a faithful historian, he should mention these circumstances." But this objection is destroyed by the parallel place in Luke, chap. viii. 30, where the inspired writer himself observes, that the demoniac was called Legion, "because many demons had entered into him."

7. *Out of the country*—Strange, that these accursed spirits should find it any mitigation of their misery to be permitted to exercise their malevolence in a particular district! But as this is supposed to have been a Heathen district, therefore the demons might consider themselves in their own territories; and probably they could act there with less restraint than they could do in a country where the worship of God was established.

8. *A great herd of swine*—These were in all probability Jewish property, and kept and used in express violation of the law of God; and therefore their destruction, in the next verse, was no more than a proper manifestation of the justice of God.

9. *Suffer us to go away*—"Send us

away," seems to express more fully the absolute power Jesus Christ had over them, permission alone was not sufficient; the very power by which they were to go away must come from Christ himself! How vain was the boast of satan, Matt. iv. 9, when we find he could not possess the body of one of the vilest animals that God has made, without immediate authority from the Most High! Since a demon cannot enter even into a swine without being sent by God himself, how little is the power or malice of any of them to be dreaded by those who have God for their portion and Protector!

10. *Ran violently down a steep place, &c.*—The prayer of these demons is heard and answered! Strange! But let it be noted, that God only hears demons and certain sinners when their prayer is the echo of his own justice. Here is an emblem of the final impenitence and ruin into which the swinish sinners, the habitually impure, more commonly fall than other sinners. Christ permits the demons to do that in the swine which he did not permit them to do in the possessed, on purpose to show us what rage they would exercise on us if left to their liberty and malice. Many are the divine favours which we do not consider, or know only in general. "But the owners of the swine lost their property." Yes; and learn from this of how small value temporal riches are in the estimation of God. He suffers them to be lost, sometimes to disengage us from them through mercy; sometimes out of justice, to punish us for having acquired or preserved them either by covetousness or injustice.

11. *The whole city came out*—Probably with the intention to destroy Jesus for having destroyed their swine; but, having seen him, they were awed by his presence, and only besought him to depart from their borders. Many rather choose to lose Jesus Christ than those temporal goods by which they gratify their passions at the expense of their souls. They love even their swine better than their salvation.

Certain doctors in both sciences, divinity and physic, grave'y tell us that these demoniacs were only common madmen, and that the disease was supposed, by the superstitious Jews, to be occasioned by demons. But, with due deference to great

characters, may not a plain man be permitted to ask, By what figure of speech can it be said that "two diseases besought, went out, filled a herd of swine, rushed down a precipice?" &c. What silly trifling is this! Some people's creeds will neither permit God nor the devil to work; and, in several respects, hardly to exist. For he who denies divine inspiration, will scarcely acknowledge diabolic influence.

12. *In his right mind*—"How wonderful a change! He who had been so wildly agitated by a mischievous demon, was now

re-instated in the peaceable possession of himself and his faculties. Instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he now sat composed and attentive at the feet of Jesus, receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning the meekness of wisdom from his example. So salutary and powerful is the agency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of sinners; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate soul."—FAWCETT.

SECTION LXXXVI.—JAIKUS'S DAUGHTER RAISED TO LIFE; A WOMAN HEALED.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW IX. 18—26; MARK V. 22—43; LUKE VIII. 41—56.

WHILE he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler¹ of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet and worshipped him; and besought him that he would come into his house; For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. And *he* besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death, *or* is even now dead: *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him,² and *so did* his disciples. But as he went much people followed him, and thronged him. And, behold, a certain woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians,³ and had spent all her living that she had upon *them*, neither could be healed of any, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse; when she had heard o. Jesus, came in the press behind,⁴ and touched the border of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may touch but his clothes,⁵ I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? When all denied; Peter, and his disciples that were with him, said unto him, Master, thou seest the multitude throng thee and press *thee*,⁶ and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: For I perceive that virtue⁷ is gone out of me. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. And when the woman saw that she

was not hid, she, knowing what was done in her, came fearing and trembling, and falling down before him, she told him all the truth, *and* declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. But Jesus turned him about,⁸ and when he saw her, he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole ;⁹ go in peace, and be whole of thy plague : And the woman was made whole from that hour. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house certain* which said to him, Thy daughter is dead : Why troublest thou the Master any further ? trouble *him* not. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the ruler's house, he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept and bewailed her ; and *he* seeth the tumult, and the people that wept, and wailed greatly, and the minstrels making a noise.¹⁰ And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Give place, *and* weep not ; why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.¹¹ And they laughed him to scorn,¹² knowing that she was dead. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took her by the hand, and called, saying unto her, Talitha cumi ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway her spirit came again, and she arose¹³ and walked ; for she was *of the age* of twelve years. And he commanded that something should be given her to eat.¹⁴ And her parents and they *all* were astonished with a great astonishment : But he charged them straitly that they should tell no man what was done. And the fame hereof went abroad¹⁵ into all that land.

1. *A certain ruler*.—To be successful in our applications to God by prayer, four things are requisite ; and this ruler teaches us what they are : (1.) A man should place himself in the presence of God : " He came unto him." (2.) He should humble himself sincerely before God : " He fell down before him, at his feet." (3.) He should lay open his wants with a holy earnestness : " He besought him greatly." (4.) He should have unbounded confidence in the power and goodness of Christ, that his request shall be granted : " Put thy hand upon her, and she shall live." He who comes in this way to God for salvation, is sure to be heard.

2. *Jesus arose, and followed him*.—Our blessed Lord could have acted as well at a distance as present ; but he goes to the place, to teach his ministers not to spare either their steps or their pains, when the salvation of a soul is in question. Let them not think it sufficient to pray for the sick in their closets ; but let them go to their bed-sides, that they may instruct and comfort them. He can have little unction in private, who does not also give himself up to public duties.

3. *Had suffered many things of many physicians, &c.*.—The case of this woman was a very afflicting one, (1.) Because of

the nature of her malady; it was such as could not be made public without exposing her to shame and contempt. (2.) It was an inveterate disorder; it had lasted twelve years. (3.) It was continual; she appears to have had no interval of health. (4.) Her disorder was aggravated by the medicines she used: "She suffered much," &c. (5.) Her malady was ruinous both to her health and circumstances: "She spent all that she had." (6.) She was now brought to the last point of wretchedness, want, and despair; she was growing worse, and had neither money nor goods to make another experiment to procure her health. (7.) She was brought so low by her disorder, as to be incapable of earning any thing to support her wretched life a little longer. It has been said, and the saying is a good one, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Never could the power and goodness of God be shown in a more difficult and distressful case. And now Jesus comes, and she is healed.

4. *Came in the press behind*—She had formed her resolution in faith; she executes it, notwithstanding her weakness, &c., with courage; and now she finds it crowned with success.

5. *If I may touch but his' clothes*—Her disorder was of that delicate nature, that modesty forbade her to make any public acknowledgment of it; and therefore she endeavoured to transact the whole business in private. Besides, the touch of such a person was, by the law, reputed unclean. By faith in Christ Jesus, little things are often rendered efficacious to our salvation. What more simple than a morsel of bread, and a few drops of wine, in the Lord's supper? And yet they who receive them by faith in the Sacrifice they represent, are made partakers of the blessings purchased by the crucified body and spilled blood of the Lord Jesus.

6. *Thou seest the multitude through thee, &c.*—Many touch Jesus who are not healed by him; the reason is, they do it not by faith, through a sense of their wants, and a conviction of his ability and willingness to save them. Faith conveys the virtue of Christ into the soul, and spiritual health is the immediate consequence of this received virtue.

7. *I perceive that virtue*—"Divine or

miraculous power." This divine emanation did not proceed always from Christ, as necessarily as odours do from plants; for then all who touched him must have been equally partakers of it. Of the many that touched him, this woman, and none else, received this divine virtue. And why? Because she came in faith. Faith alone attracts and receives the energetic influence of God at all times. There would be more miracles, at least of spiritual healing, were there more faith among those who are called believers.

8. *Jesus turned him about*—To take notice of it himself, and to notify it to others, for these reasons: (1.) To free the woman from fear, lest her conscience should call her recreant, as one that had stolen a cure. (2.) To make up in her what was wanting to her faith, if she should have any such thought to do so. (3.) To manifest her faith for other men's imitation. (4.) To make known his omniscience, and so his Divinity. (5.) To confirm the ruler's faith, and to fit him for further mercy. (6.) To teach her and us, that not his garment, but himself, did the cure."—CHRYSOSTOM.

9. *Thy faith hath made thee whole*—Thy faith in my power has interested that power in thy behalf, so that thou art saved from thy disorder, and from all its consequences.

10. *The people, and the minstrels making a noise*—How often, on the death of relatives, do men encumber and perplex themselves with vain, worldly, and tumultuous ceremonies, instead of making profitable reflections on death!

11. *The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth*—That is, she is not dead, so as to continue under the power of death; but shall be raised from it as a person is from natural sleep.

12. *They laughed him to scorn*—People of the world generally ridicule those truths which they neither comprehend nor love, and deride those who publish them; but a faithful minister of God, copying the example of Christ, keeps on his way, and does the work of his Lord and Master.

13. *And she arose*—The Fountain of life thus communicating its vital energy to the dead body. Where death has already taken place, no power but that of the great God can restore to life; in such a case, vain is

the help of man. So the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins, that is, sentenced to death because of transgression, and is thus dead in law, can only be restored to spiritual life by the mighty power of the Lord Jesus; because he alone has made the atonement, and he alone can pardon transgression. If the spiritually dead person be utterly unconcerned about the state and fate of his soul, let a converted relative either bring him to Christ by leading him to hear the unadulterated gospel of the kingdom, or bring Christ to him by fervent, faithful, and persevering prayer.

14. *Something should be given her to eat*—For though he had employed an extraordinary power to bring her to life, he wills that she should be continued in existence by the use of ordinary means.

While Christ teaches men the knowledge

of the true God, and the way of salvation, he, at the same time, teaches them lessons of prudence, economy, and common sense. And it is worthy of remark, that all who are taught of him are not only saved, but their understandings are much improved. True religion, civilization, mental improvement, common sense, and orderly behaviour go hand in hand.

15. *And the same hereof went abroad*—In this business Jesus himself scarcely appears, but the work effected by his sovereign power is fully manifested; to teach us, that it is the business of a successful preacher of the gospel to conceal himself as much as possible, that God alone may have the glory of his own grace. This is a proper miracle, and a full exemplification of the unlimited power of Christ.

SECTION LXXXVII.—THE BLIND AND DUMB CURED.

A.D. 27.

MATTHEW IX. 27—34.

AND when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David,¹ have mercy on us.² And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: And Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?³ They said unto him, Yea, Lord.⁴ Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame⁵ in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.⁶ And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake:⁷ And the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.⁸ But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.⁹

1. *Son of David*—This was the same as if they had called him "Messiah." Two things here are worthy of remark: (1.) That it was a generally-received opinion at this time in Judea, that the Messiah should be Son of David. (2.) That Jesus Christ was generally and incontestably acknowledged as coming from this stock.

2. *Have mercy on us*—That man has already a measure of heavenly light who knows that he has no merit; that his cry

should be a cry for mercy; that he must be fervent; and that in praying he must follow Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the "Son of David" expected from heaven.

3. *Believe ye that I am able to do this?*—Without faith Jesus does nothing to men's souls now, no more than he did to their bodies in the days of his flesh.

4. *They said unto him, Yea, Lord*—Under a sense of our spiritual blindness we should have, (1.) A lively faith in the

almighty grace of Christ. (2.) A fervent, incessant cry for the communication of this grace. (3.) A proper view of his incarnation, because it is through his union with our nature, and by his sufferings and death, we are to expect salvation.

5. *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame*—They should have held their peace; for to obey is better than sacrifice; but man must always be wiser than God. However, it may be profitable to remark, (1.) That honour pursues those who fly from it. (2.) He who is thoroughly sensible of God's mercy cannot long contain his acknowledgments. (3.) That God in general requires that what a man has received, for his own salvation, shall become subservient to that of others: "Let your light so shine," &c. God chooses to help man by man, that all may be firmly knit together in brotherly love.

6. *A dumb man possessed with a devil*—Some demons rendered the persons they possessed paralytic, some blind, others dumb, &c. It was the interest of satan to hide his influences under the appearance of natural disorders. A man who does not acknowledge his sin to God, who prays not for salvation, who returns no praises for the

mercies he is continually receiving, may well be said "to be possessed with a dumb demon."

7. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake*—The very miracle which was now wrought was to be the demonstrative proof of the Messiah's being manifested in the flesh.

8. *It was never so seen in Israel*—The greatest of the prophets has never been able to do such miracles as these. This was the remark of the people; and thus we find that the poor and the simple were more ready to acknowledge the hand of God than the rich and the learned. Many miracles had been wrought in the course of this one day, and this excited their surprise.

9. *He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils*—It is a consummate piece of malice to attribute the works of God to the devil. Envy cannot suffer the approbation which is given to the excellencies of others. Those whose hearts are possessed by this vice speak the very language of the devil. Calumny is but a little distance from envy. Though all persons may not have as much envy as the Pharisees, yet they should fear having some degree of it, as all have the principle from whence it proceeds, namely, sin.

SECTION LXXXVIII.—CHRIST REJECTED BY THE NAZARENES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XIII. 54—58; IX. 35—38; MARK VI. 1—6.

AND he went out from thence, and came into his own country; ¹ and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: And many hearing *him* were astonished, ² saying, From whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter? ³ the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, ⁴ and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all here with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, ⁵ but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*; *but* did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief. ⁶ And he marvelled

because of their unbelief. And Jesus went round about all the cities and villages,⁷ teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest⁸ truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers⁹ into his harvest.

1. *And came into his own country*—Probably Nazareth, where his parents lived, and where he had continued till his thirtieth year, though it appears he had a lodging in Peter's house at Capernaum.

2. *Many were astonished*—It appears, hence, that our blessed Lord had lived in obscurity all the time above specified; for his countrymen appear not to have heard his doctrines, nor seen his miracles, until now. It is a melancholy truth, that those who should know Christ best are often the most ignorant of himself, the doctrines of his word, and the operations of his Spirit.

3. *Is not this the carpenter?*—Among the ancient Jews, every father was bound to do four things for his son: (1.) To circumcise him. (2.) To redeem him. (3.) To teach him the law. (4.) To teach him a trade. And this was founded on the following just maxim: "He who teaches not his son to do some work, is as if he taught him robbery!" It is therefore likely that Joseph brought up our Lord to his own trade. An honest trade is no discredit to any man. He who spends his time in idleness is fit for any business in which the devil chooses to employ him.

4. *Is not his mother Mary, and his brethren, James, &c.*—This insulting question seems to intimate that our Lord's family was a very obscure one; and that they were of small repute among their neighbours, except for their piety. Those teachers, in name, have left their successors behind them; but, as in the days of Christ, so now, God has in his mercy rescued the flock out of the hands of those who only fed upon their flesh, and clothed themselves with their wool. The days in which a man was obliged to give his pro-

perty to what was called "the church" for the salvation of his soul, Christ being left out of the question, are, thank God, nearly over and gone. Jesus is the true Shepherd; without him there is nothing but fainting, fatigue, vexation, and dispersion. O that we may be led out and in by him, and find pasture!

5. *A prophet is not without honour*—This seems to have been a proverbial mode of speech, generally true, but not without some exceptions. The apparent meanness of our Lord was one pretence why they rejected him; and yet, "God manifest in the flesh," humbling himself to the condition of a servant, and to the death of the cross, is the only foundation for the salvation of a lost world. Perhaps our Lord means by "prophet" in this place, himself alone, as if he had said, My ministry is more generally reputed, and my doctrine better received, in any other part of the land than in my own country, among my own relatives; because, knowing the obscurity of my birth, they can scarcely suppose that I have these things from heaven.

6. *But did not many mighty works because of their unbelief*—Unbelief and contempt drive Christ out of the heart, as they did out of his own country. Faith seems to put the almighty power of God into the hands of men; whereas unbelief appears to tie up even the hands of the Almighty. A man, generally speaking, can do but little good among his relatives, because it is difficult for them to look with the eyes of faith upon one whom they have been accustomed to behold with the eyes of the flesh.

7. *Jesus went about all the cities and villages*—A real minister of Jesus Christ, after his example, is neither detained in

one place by a comfortable provision made by some, nor discouraged from pursuing his work by the calumny and persecution of others. It is proper to remark, that, wherever Christ comes, the proofs of his presence evidently appear: He works none but salutary and beneficial miracles, because his ministry is a ministry of salvation.

8. *The harvest*—The souls who are ready to receive the truth are very numerous; "but the labourers are few." There are multitudes of scribes, Pharisees, and priests, of reverend and right reverend men; but there are few that work. Jesus wishes for labourers, not gentlemen, who are either idle drones, or slaves to pleasure and sin,—

"Born to consume the produce of the soil."

In all worldly concerns, if there be the prospect of much gain, most men are willing enough to labour; but if it be to save their own souls, or the souls of others, what indolence, backwardness, and carelessness! while their adversary, the devil, is "going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" and a careless soul, and especially a careless minister, is his especial prey. The place of

the harvest is the whole earth: It signifies little where a man works, provided it be by the appointment, in the Spirit, and with the blessing, of God.

9. *That he will send forth labourers*— "That he would thrust forth labourers." Those who are fittest for the work are generally most backward to the employment. The man who is forward to become a preacher knows little of God, of human nature, or of his own heart. It is God's province to thrust out such preachers as shall labour; and it is our duty to treat him to do so. A minister of Christ is represented as a day-labourer: He comes into the harvest, not to become lord of it, not to live on the labour of others, but to work, and to labour his day. Though the work may be very severe, yet, to use a familiar expression, there is good wages in the harvest-home; and the day, though hot, is but a short one. How earnestly should the flock of Christ pray to the good Shepherd to send them pastors after his own heart, who will feed them with knowledge, and who shall be the means of spreading the knowledge of his truth and the savour of his grace over the face of the whole earth!

SECTION LXXXIX.—CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW X. 1—15; MARK VI. 7—11; LUKE IX. 1—5.

AND when he had called together unto *him* his twelve disciples,¹ he gave them power and authority over all devils, *or* unclean spirits,² to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness; and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles³ are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother;⁴ James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent forth by two and two, and commanded⁵ them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles,⁶ and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:⁷ But go rather to the lost sheep⁸ of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach,⁹ saying, The kingdom of heaven is

at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils : Freely ye have received, freely give.¹⁰ And *he* commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only : And he said unto them, Provide no bread, no money, neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,¹¹ nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats a-piece, neither shoes, but be shod with sandals, nor yet staves :¹² For the workman is worthy of his meat.¹³ And he said unto them, Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy ;¹⁴ and whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, till ye depart from that place.¹⁵ And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it : But if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the very dust of your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment,¹⁶ than for that city.

1. *Twelve disciples*—Our Lord seems to have had the twelve patriarchs, heads of the congregation of Israel, in view, in his choosing twelve disciples.

2. *He gave them power over unclean spirits*—Here we find the first call to the Christian ministry, and the end proposed by the commission given. To call persons to the ministry belongs only to Him who can give them "power to cast out unclean spirits." He whose ministry is not accompanied with healing to diseased souls, was never called of God. But let it be observed, that, though the spiritual gifts requisite for the ministry must be supplied by God himself, yet this does not preclude the importance of human learning. No man can have his mind too well cultivated, to whom a dispensation of the gospel is committed. The influence of the Spirit of God was no more designed to render human learning useless, than that learning should be considered as superseding the necessity of divine inspiration.

3. *Apostles*—It is worthy of notice, that those who were Christ's "apostles" were first his disciples ; to intimate, that men must be first taught of God, before they be sent of God. Jesus Christ never made an apostle of any man who was not first his scholar or disciple. These twelve apostles were chosen : (1.) That they might be with our Lord, to see and witness his miracles,

and hear his doctrine. (2.) That they might bear testimony of the former, and preach his truth to mankind.

4. *The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, &c.*—Happy the brothers who are joint envoys of heaven, and the parents who have two or more children employed as ambassadors for God ! But this is a very rare case ; and family compacts in the work of the ministry are dangerous, and should be avoided.

5. *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded*—To be properly qualified for a minister of Christ, a man must be, (1.) Filled with the Spirit of holiness : (2.) Called to this particular work : (3.) Instructed in its nature, &c. : And, (4.) Commissioned to go forth, and testify the gospel of the grace of God. These are four different gifts which a man must receive from God by Christ Jesus. To these let him add all the human qualifications he can possibly attain ; as in his arduous work he will require every gift and every grace.

6. *Go not into the way of the Gentiles*—Our Lord only intended that the first offers of salvation should be made to the Jewish people ; and that the Heathen should not be noticed in this first mission, that no stumbling-block might be cast in the way of the Jews.

7. *Into any city of the Samaritans enter*

ye not—The Samaritans had afterwards the gospel preached to them by Christ himself, John iv. 4, &c., for the reason assigned above. Such as God seems at first to pass by are often those for whom he has designed his greatest benefits, (witness the Samaritans, and the Gentiles in general,) but he has his own proper time to discover and reveal them.

8. *But go rather to the lost sheep, &c.*—The Jewish church was the ancient fold of God; but the sheep had wandered from their Shepherd, and were lost. Our blessed Lord sends these under-shepherds to seek, find, and bring them back to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.

9. *And as ye go, preach*—And as "you proceed, proclaim like heralds;" make this proclamation wherever ye go, and while ye are journeying. Preach and travel; and, as ye travel, preach; proclaim salvation to all you meet. Wherever the ministers of Christ go, they find lost, ruined souls; and, wherever they find them, they should proclaim Jesus, and his power to save.

10. *Freely ye have received, freely give*—A rule very necessary, and of great extent. A minister or labourer in the gospel vineyard, though worthy of his comfortable support while in the work, should never preach for hire, or make a secular traffic of a spiritual work. What a scandal is it for a man to traffic with gifts which he pretends, at least, to have received from the Holy Ghost, of which he is not the master, but the dispenser. He who preaches to get a living, or to make a fortune, is guilty of the most infamous sacrilege.

11. *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses*—In a thousand instances an apostolic preacher, who goes to the wilderness to seek the lost sheep, will be exposed to hunger and cold, and other inconveniences; he must therefore resign himself to God, depending on his providence for the necessaries of life. If God have sent him, he is bound to support him, and will do it: Anxiety, therefore, in him, is a double crime, as it insinuates a bad opinion of the Master who has employed him. Every missionary should make himself master of this subject.

12. *Nor yet staves*—As if he had said,

"Ye shall take nothing to defend yourselves with, because ye are the servants of the Lord, and are to be supported by his bounty, and defended by his power. In a word, be like men in haste, and eager to begin the important work of the ministry. The sheep are lost—ruined! Satan is devouring them! Give all diligence to pluck them out of the jaws of the destroyer."

13. *The workman is worthy of his meat*—It is a maintenance, and that only, which a minister of God is to expect, and that he has a divine right to; but not to make a fortune, or lay up wealth: Besides, it is the workman, he that labours in the word and doctrine, that is to get even this. How contrary to Christ is it for a man to have vast revenues, as a minister of the gospel, who ministers no gospel, and who spends the revenues of the church to its disgrace and ruin!

14. *Inquire who in it is worthy*—That is, of a good character; for a preacher of the gospel should be careful of his reputation, and lodge only with those who are of a regular life.

15. *There abide, till ye depart from that place*—Go not about from house to house. Acting contrary to this precept, has often brought great disgrace on the gospel of God. Stay in your own lodging as much as possible, that you may have time for prayer and study. Seldom frequent the tables of the rich and great; if you do, it will unavoidably prove a snare to you. The unction of God will perish from your mind, and your preaching be only a dry barren repetition of old things; the bread of God in your hands will be like dry, mouldy, Gibeonitish crusts. He who knows the value of time, and will redeem it from useless chit-chat, and trifling visits, will find enough for all the purposes of his own salvation, and the cultivation of his mind, and the work of the ministry. He to whom time is not precious, and who lives not by rule, never finds time sufficient for any thing; is always embarrassed; always in a hurry, and never capable of bringing one good purpose to proper effect.

16. *In the day of judgment*—If men are thus treated for not receiving the preachers of the gospel, what will it be to despise the gospel itself, to decry it, to preach the contrary, to hinder the preach-

ing of it, to abuse those who do preach it in its purity, or to render it fruitless by calumnies and lies? Their punishment, our Lord intimates, shall be greater than that inflicted on the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah!

SECTION XC.—CHRIST CAUTIONS HIS APOSTLES.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW X. 16—28.

BEHOLD, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves :¹ Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men : For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak :² For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father³ which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother⁴ to death, and the father the child : And the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake : But he that endureth to the end shall be saved.⁵ But when they persecute you⁶ in this city, flee ye into another : For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come. The disciple is not above *his* master,⁷ nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,⁸ and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not⁹ therefore : For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness,¹⁰ *that* speak ye in light : And what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body,¹¹ but are not able to kill the soul : But rather fear him¹² which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

1. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*—He who is called to preach the gospel is called to embrace a state of constant labour, and frequent suffering. He who gets ease and pleasure, in consequence of embracing the ministerial office, neither preaches the gospel, nor is sent of God. If he did the work of an evangelist, wicked men and demons would both oppose him.

2. *Take no thought how or what ye shall speak*—Be not anxiously careful, because

such anxiety argues distrust in God, and infallibly produces a confused mind. In such a state, no person is fit to proclaim or vindicate the truth. This promise, "It shall be given you," &c., banishes all distrust and inquietude on dangerous occasions ; but without encouraging sloth and negligence, and without dispensing with the obligation we are under to prepare ourselves by the meditation of sacred truths, by the study of the holy scriptures, and by prayer.

3. *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, &c.*—This was an extraordinary promise, and was literally fulfilled to those first preachers of the gospel; and to them it was essentially necessary, because the New Testament dispensation was to be fully opened by their extraordinary inspiration. In a certain measure, it may be truly said, that the Holy Spirit animates the true disciples of Christ, and enables them to speak. The Head speaks in his members, by his Spirit; and it is the province of the Spirit of God to speak for God. Neither surprise, defect of talents, nor even ignorance itself, could hurt the cause of God, in the primitive times, when the hearts and minds of those divine men were influenced by the Holy Spirit.

4. *And the brother shall deliver up the brother, &c.*—What an astonishing enmity is there in the soul of man against God and goodness! That men should think they did God service, in putting to death those who differ from them in their political or religious creed, is a thing that cannot be accounted for but on the principle of an indescribable depravity.

5. *He that endureth to the end shall be saved*—He who holds fast faith and a good conscience "to the end," till the punishment threatened against this wicked people be poured out; "he shall be saved," preserved from the destruction that shall fall upon the workers of iniquity. This verse is commonly understood to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is also true, that they who do not hold fast faith and a good conscience till death, have no room to hope for an admission into the kingdom of God.

6. *But when they persecute you*—It is prudence and humility, when charity or righteousness obliges us not to the contrary, to avoid persecution. To deprive those who are disposed to do evil of the opportunities of doing it; to convey the grace which they despise to others; to accomplish God's designs of justice on the former, and of mercy on the latter, are consequences of the flight of a persecuted preacher. This flight is a precept to those who are highly necessary to the church of Christ, an advice to those who might imprudently draw upon themselves persecution, and of indulgence for those who are weak. But this flight is

highly criminal in those mercenary preachers who, through love to their flesh and their property, abandon the flock of Christ to the wolf.

7. *The disciple is not above his master*—Or, in plainer terms, "A scholar is not above his teacher." The saying itself requires no comment, its truth and reasonableness are self-evident; but to the spirit and design we should carefully attend. Jesus is the great Teacher; we profess to be his scholars. He who keeps the above saying in his heart will never complain of what he suffers. How many irregular thoughts and affections is this maxim capable of restraining! A man is not a scholar of Christ, unless he learn his doctrine; and he does not learn it as he ought, unless he put it in practice.

8. *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master*—Can any man who pretends to be a scholar or disciple of Jesus Christ, expect to be treated well by the world? Will not the world love its own, and them only? Why, then, so much impatience under sufferings, such an excessive sense of injuries, such delicacy? Can you expect any thing from the world better than you receive? If you want the honour that comes from it, abandon Jesus Christ, and it will again receive you into its bosom. But you will, no doubt, count the cost before you do this. Take the converse, abandon the love of the world, &c., and God will receive you.

9. *Fear them not*—A general direction to all the persecuted followers of Christ. Fear them not, for they can make you suffer nothing worse than they have made Christ suffer; and under all trials he has promised the most ample support.

10. *What I tell you in darkness*—A man ought to preach that only which he has learned from God's Spirit and his testimonies; but let him not pretend to bring forth any thing new or mysterious. There is nothing that concerns our salvation that is newer than the new covenant; and in that there are, properly speaking, no mysteries: What was secret before is now made manifest in the gospel of the ever-blessed God.

11. *Fear not them which kill the body*—Those who slay with acts of cruelty; alluding probably to the cruelties which persecutors should exercise on his followers

in their martyrdom. "But are not able to kill the soul." Hence we find that the body and the soul are distinct principles, for the body may be slain and the soul escape; and, secondly, that the soul is immaterial, for the murderers of the body are not able, have it not in their power, to injure it.

12. *Fear him*—It is not hell-fire we are to fear, but it is God; without the stroke of whose justice, hell itself would be no punishment, and whose frown would render heaven itself insupportable. What strange blindness is it to expose our souls to endless ruin, which should enjoy God eternally; and to save and pamper the body, by which we enjoy nothing but the creatures, and them only for a moment!

"Thus our Lord at once declares the soul's immortality, and shows how limited is the power of tyrannous persecutors;

their malignant arm reaches not the soul; it can neither destroy its peace here, nor its happy existence hereafter. This text also furnishes a decisive argument in favour of the conscious existence of the soul in a separate state. For, not to urge that we cannot conceive of the existence of the soul at all without consciousness; yet, if by the death of the body it were deprived of perception and thought, of activity and enjoyment, though all these should be restored at the last day, it would be as truly *killed* as the body, which also at the resurrection shall have its life, sensation, and activity, more perfectly restored. It is only upon the basis of the soul's immortality, that a true courage in the way of duty can be built: Well might he be excused from suffering for any truth, who has no hope beyond the present life."—R. WATSON.

SECTION XCI.—CHRIST ENCOURAGES HIS APOSTLES.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW X. 29—42; XI. 1; MARK VI. 12, 13; LUKE IX. 6.

ARE not two sparrows sold for a farthing?¹ and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.² Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value³ than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,⁴ him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me⁵ before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance⁶ against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me⁷ is not worthy of me: And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross,⁸ and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life⁹ shall lose it: And he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you,¹⁰ receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous

man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water*¹¹ only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. And they departed, and went out through the towns, and preached the gospel, that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them* every where.

1. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?*—The doctrine intended to be inculcated is this: The providence of God extends to the minutest things; every thing is continually under the government and care of God; and nothing occurs without his will or permission. If, then, he regards sparrows, how much more man, and how much more still the soul that trusts in him!

All things are ordered by the counsel of God: This is a great consolation to those who are tried and afflicted. The belief of an all-wise, all-directing Providence, is a powerful support under the most grievous accidents of life. Nothing escapes his merciful regards, not even the smallest things of which he may be said to be only the Creator and Preserver; how much less those of whom he is the Father, Saviour, and endless Felicity.

2. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*—Nothing is more astonishing than the care and concern of God for his followers. The least circumstances of their life are regulated, not merely by that general providence which extends to all things, but by a particular providence, which fits and directs all things to the design of their salvation, causing them all to co-operate for their present and eternal good.

“The very brightness of this revelation of the doctrine of a particular providence has dazzled the eye of mere human philosophy. A general providence it may often admit; but not this condescension of the Divine Being to particulars. The true reason, however, is, that, with all its pretence to high and noble views of God, it, in fact, grovels in low and unworthy conceptions of his wisdom and power; and it knows nothing

of his LOVE, his peculiar love to those who trust in him. But even in right reason, the care of the whole necessarily implies the care of all the parts, however minute; and if it was not beneath God to create the smallest objects, it can never be thought below him to preserve and order them. Nor ought the allegation, that God has established general laws, to be suffered to obscure in our minds the great truth which these words of Christ contain. These general laws depend for their efficiency upon his continued agency; for natural things have no powers which they derive not from him; and these they cannot exercise independently of him; or even that general government of the world which is conceded would be put out of his hand. Ordinarily, there is in God what has been called an ACQUIESCENCE in a common course of events, or rather his power ordinarily works in an observable regular manner; but there is also INTERPOSITION, as well as acquiescence, or prayer and individual trust must be expunged from religion, and with them religion itself must lose the great foundations upon which it rests. These, then, are the noble views which are opened to us by the Divine Teacher. God regulates every thing, however minute, without degradation to his glorious majesty, and without embarrassment to his infinite intelligence. He governs absolutely, without violence to the moral freedom of accountable beings, and their contending volitions wonderfully but certainly work out his purposes; but no general arrangement can render his special interposition impracticable, since all is foreseen and all provided for. The true disciple may therefore fully ‘trust in his mercy:’ God himself takes his cause into his hand, orders his steps, weighs out his blessings

and his afflictions, wards off his dangers, controls his enemies, disposes all the events of life into a course of hallowing discipline, and never permits him to fall into the hands of an enemy, except when, by that means, some good to the church, and some benefit to the suffering disciple himself, are to be accomplished by it; so that, even then, 'he maketh the wrath of man to praise him.' This may often take place by an inscrutable process; but the result is certain."

—R. WATSON.

3. *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value*—None can estimate the value of a soul, for which Christ has given his blood and life! Have confidence in his goodness; for he who so dearly purchased thee, will miraculously preserve and save thee.

4. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men*—That is, whosoever shall acknowledge me to be the Messiah, and have his heart and life regulated by my Spirit and doctrine. It is not merely sufficient to have the heart right before God; there must be a firm, manly, and public profession of Christ before men. "I am no hypocrite," says one; neither should you be. "I will keep my religion to myself;" that is, you will not confess Christ before men; then he will renounce you before God.

5. *Whosoever shall deny me*—Whosoever prefers his worldly interest to his duty to God, sets a greater value on earthly than on heavenly things, and prefers the friendship of men to the approbation of God.

Let it be remembered, that to be renounced by Christ is to have him neither for a Mediator nor Saviour. To appear before the tribunal of God without having Christ for our Advocate; and, on the contrary, to have him there as our Judge, and a witness against us,—how can a man think of this, and not die with horror?

6. *I am come to set a man at variance*—The Spirit of Christ can have no union with the spirit of the world. Even a father, while unconverted, will oppose a godly child. Thus the spirit that is in those who sin against God is opposed to that Spirit which is in the followers of the Most High. It is the spirits, then, that are in opposition, and not the persons.

7. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, &c.*—He whom we love the most, is he whom we study most to please, and

whose will and interests we prefer in all cases. If, in order to please a father or mother who are opposed to vital godliness, we abandon God's ordinances and followers, we are unworthy of any thing but hell.

"We would cherish, with grateful veneration, the ties which bind us to the household altar, and the hearth. We would honour and love those to whom nature has cemented us, and with whose spirits our own ought to be sweetly united; and the pangs of separation we can estimate and mourn. But when eternity interferes with her imperious mandates; when the soul's welfare appeals with its high demand; when the Saviour, against human wishes, commands, 'Arise and follow me,' the ties must be rent; we must bid farewell; we must resist alike entreaties and threats; we must determine, we ought to obey God, rather than man; and even should the heart bleed at the parting, we must listen to, and be impelled by, the words of our Lord."—J. PARSONS.

8. *He that taketh not his cross*—That is, He who is not ready, after my example, to suffer death in the cause of my religion, "is not worthy of me," does not deserve to be called my disciple.

9. *He that findeth his life, &c.*—That is, he who, for the sake of his temporal interest, abandons his spiritual concerns, shall lose his soul; and he who, in order to avoid martyrdom, aljures the pure religion of Christ, shall lose his soul, and perhaps his life too. "He that findeth his life shall lose it," was literally fulfilled in Archbishop Cranmer. He confessed Christ against the devil, and his eldest son, the Pope. He was ordered to be burnt; to save his life he recanted, and was, notwithstanding, burnt. Whatever a man sacrifices to God is never lost; for he finds it again in God.

10. *He that receiveth you*—Treats you kindly; "receiveth me;" I will consider the kindness as shown to myself; for he who receiveth me, as the true Messiah, receiveth that God by whose counsels, and through whose love, I am come.

11. *Unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water*—Love heightens the smallest actions, and gives a worth to them which they cannot possess without it. Under a just and merciful God, every sin is either punished or pardoned, and every good action rewarded

The most indigent may exercise the works of mercy and charity ; seeing even a cup of cold water, given in the name of Jesus, shall not lose its reward. How astonishing is God's kindness ! It is not the rich merely whom he calls on to be charitable ; but even the poor, and the most impoverished of the poor ! God gives the power

and inclination to be charitable, and then rewards the work which, it may be truly said, "God himself hath wrought." It is the name of Jesus that sanctifies every thing, and renders services, in themselves comparatively contemptible, of high worth in the sight of God.

SECTION XCII.—HEROD DESIRES TO SEE CHRIST.

A. D. 27.

MATTHEW XIV. 1, 2, 6—12 ; MARK VI. 14—29 ;

LUKE IX. 7—9.

AT that time king Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, *and* of all that was done by him : (For his name was spread abroad :) And he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist ;¹ he is risen from the dead ;² and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. And he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, That John was risen from the dead ; and of some, That Elias had appeared ; and of others, That one of the old prophets was risen again ; and others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, John have I beheaded : But who is this, of whom I hear such things ? It is John, whom I beheaded : He is risen from the dead. And he desired to see him. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake : For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him ; but she could not : For Herod feared John. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee ; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced before them, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee. And he promised *her* with an oath, *and* swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask ? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she, being before instructed of her mother, came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me here by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.³ And the king was exceeding sorry : Nevertheless for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him at meat,⁴ he would not reject her, *but* commanded *it* to be given *her*. And

immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: And he went and beheaded John in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: And the damsel brought *it*, and gave it to her mother.⁵ And when his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took up his corpse,⁶ and laid it in a tomb; and went and told Jesus.

1. *This is John the Baptist*—See the power of conscience! He is miserable, because he is guilty; being continually under the dominion of self-accusation, reproach, and remorse. No need for the Baptist now: Conscience performs the office of ten thousand accusers! But, to complete the misery, a guilty conscience offers no relief from God; points out no salvation from sin.

2. *He is risen from the dead*—From this we may observe: (1.) That the resurrection of the dead was a common opinion among the Jews; and, (2.) That the materiality of the soul made no part of Herod's creed. Bad and profligate as he was, it was not deemed by him a thing impossible with God to raise the dead; and the spirit of the murdered Baptist had a permanent resurrection in his guilty conscience.

3. *Give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist*—The evangelist says she was instructed before, by her mother, to ask the Baptist's head! What a most infernal mother, to give such instructions to her child! and what a promising daughter to receive them! What a present for a young lady!—the bloody head of the murdered forerunner of Jesus! And what a gratification for an adulterous wife, and incestuous mother! The disturber of her illicit pleasures, and the troubler of her brother-husband's conscience, is no more! Short, however, was their glorying!

“O the terrors and tortures of a guilty heart! Herod's conscience told him, he had offered an unjust and cruel violence to an innocent person; and now he thinks that John's ghost haunts him. Revel, O Herod! and feast, and frolic, and please thyself with dances, and triumphs, and pastimes: Thy sin shall be as some fury that shall invisibly follow thee, and scourge thy guilty heart with secret lashes, and begin thy hell within thee.”—BISHOP HALL.

4. *Which sat with him at meat*—Who

were probably such as himself, and would have considered it a breach of honour if he had not fulfilled his sworn promise: He therefore commanded it to be given!

5. *He brought his head in a charger, and the damsel gave it to her mother*—There is no person so revengeful as a lascivious woman when reproved and blamed. A preacher of the gospel has most to fear from this quarter:—The first of this profession lost his life for the sake of truth and chastity; and others, especially those who have any thing to do with men in power who are profligates, may learn what they are to expect in return for a faithful discharge of their duty.

6. *They came, and took up his corpse*—The head was in the possession of Herodias, who, it is probable, took a diabolic pleasure in viewing that speechless mouth which had often been the cause of planting thorns in her criminal bed; and in offering indignities to that tongue from which she could no longer dread a reproof. Her character justifies every bad conjecture that can well be formed on this head: And St. Jerome positively says that, when she got it, she drew out the tongue, and thrust it through with her bodkin. On the whole we may observe: That the diversions of the world, feasting and dancing, are but too commonly the occasions of sin. After so fatal an example as this, can we doubt whether balls are not snares for souls; destructive of chastity, modesty, and sometimes even of humanity itself; and a pernicious invention to excite the most criminal passions? How many on such occasions have sacrificed their chastity, and then, to hide their shame, have stifled the feelings of the human being and the parent, and, by direct or indirect means, have put a period to the innocent offspring of their connexions! Unhappy mother, who exposes her daughter to the same shipwreck herself has suffered, and makes her own

child the instrument of her lust and revenge! Behold here, ye professedly religious parents, the fruits of what was doubtless called, in those times, elegant breeding and accomplished dancing! Fix your eyes on that vicious mother, that prostituted daughter, and especially on that murdered ambassador of God, and then send your children to genteel boarding-schools, to learn the accomplishment of

dancing! where the fear of God makes no part of the education.

“Of her daughter it is related, that she going over the ice in winter, the ice brake, and she slipped in to the head, which at last was severed from her body by the sharpness of the ice, God requiring her head for that of the Baptist’s she desired; which, if true, was a wonderful providence.”

—WHITBY.

SECTION XCIII.—CHRIST RETIRES INTO A DESERT.

A.D. 27. MATTHEW XIV. 13, 14; MARK VI. 30—34; LUKE IX. 10, 11; JOHN VI. 1, 2.

AND the apostles, when they were returned, gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And when Jesus heard of it, he said unto them, Come ye¹ yourselves apart into a desert place,² and rest a while: For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And after these things, he took them, and went aside, and they departed thence by ship privately, into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida; and Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea* of Tiberias. And when the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and heard *thereof*, a great multitude followed him,³ because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased: And they ran afoot thither out of all the cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. 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 received them, and began to teach them many things, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed their sick, *even all* them that had need of healing.

1. *When Jesus heard, he said, Come ye, &c.*—Had the blessed Jesus continued in that place, it is probable the hand of this impure female murderer would have been stretched out against him also: He withdrew, therefore, not through fear, but to teach his messengers rather to yield to the storm than expose themselves to destruction, where, from circumstances, the case is evidently hopeless.

2. *Apart into a desert place.*—“In

solitude a man may go to heaven by the way of prayer and devotion; but in society he carries others with him in the way of mercy and charity. In solitude there are fewer temptations, but then there is likewise the exercise of fewer virtues. Solitude is a good school, and the world is the best theatre. The institution is best there, the practice here. The wilderness hath the advantage of discipline, but society furnishes the opportunities of perfection.

It was in solitude that Christ kept his vigils; the desert places heard him; in the wilderness he vanquished satan; upon a mountain apart he was transfigured."—BISHOP TAYLOR.

3. *A great multitude followed him*—Observe here five grand effects of divine grace: (1.) The people are drawn to follow him. (2.) He kindly receives them. (3.) He instructs them in the things of God. (4.) He heals all their diseases. (5.) He feeds their bodies and their souls. Reader, Jesus is the same to the present moment. Follow him, and he will receive, instruct, heal, feed, and save thy soul unto eternal life.

"In following Christ, we are blessed

with repose of conscience; we are exalted to fellowship with God; we are endowed with capacities for improving in the knowledge of mysteries, identified with the highest welfare of our being; we become the companions of the excellent of the earth, and the innumerable company of angels; we are urged to a rapid increase in the graces which dignify the character, and are a pledge of the sublimity of the final destiny; we are supplied with strong consolation for sorrow, and firm support for death; and prospects are opened which stretch away to the immensities of immortality."—J. PARSONS.

SECTION XCIV.—CHRIST FEEDS ABOVE FIVE THOUSAND.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XIV. 15—23; MARK VI. 35—46;
LUKE IX. 12—17; JOHN VI. 3—14.

AND Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. And when the day began to wear away, and was now far spent, and it was evening; then his disciples, *even* the twelve, came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed, send the multitude away, that they may go¹ into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and buy themselves bread, and get victuals: For they have nothing to eat. When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: For he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart;² give ye them to eat.³ And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread *and* meat for all this people, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes:⁴ But we have no more, *and* what are they among so many? He said, Bring them hither to me.⁵ And he commanded the multitude to sit down upon the green grass; and he said to his disciples, Make them all sit down by companies. Now there was much grass in the place. And they did so, and made them all sit down. So the men sat down in ranks,

by hundreds, and by fifties ; in number about five thousand. And when Jesus had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven,⁶ and when he had given thanks, he blessed⁷ them, and brake the loaves, and distributed *them* to his disciples to set before the multitude that were set down, and the disciples *gave them* to the multitude ; and likewise the two fishes divided he among them all, as much as they would. And they did all eat, and were filled.⁸ When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves and of the fishes, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. And they that had eaten of the loaves were about five thousand men, beside women and children. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king,⁹ straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go before him unto the other side, unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, and the evening was come, he departed again, *and* went up himself alone, into a mountain to pray.¹⁰

1. *Send the multitude away, that they may go, &c.*—The disciples of Christ are solicitous for the people's temporal as well as spiritual welfare ; and he is not worthy to be called a minister of Christ, who does not endeavour to promote both to the uttermost of his power. The preaching of Christ must have been accompanied with uncommon power to these people's souls, to have induced them to leave their homes to follow him from village to village, for they could never hear enough ; and to neglect to make use of any means for the support of their lives, so that they might still have the privilege of hearing him. When a soul is either well replenished with the bread of life, or hungry after it, the necessities of the body are, for the time, little regarded.

2. *They need not depart*—He that seeks first the kingdom of heaven is sure to have every temporal requisite. When a man ensures the first, God always takes care to throw the other into the bargain. He who has an interest in Jesus has in him an inexhaustible treasure of spiritual and temporal good. Though the means by which man may help his fellows have failed, we

are not to suppose that the bounty of God is exhausted. When we are about to give up all hope of farther supply, the gracious word of Christ still holds good: "They need not depart ; give ye them to eat."

3. *Give ye them to eat*—Should we say, "Lord, how shall thy poor, feeble ministering servants feed so many hungry souls as attend thy word ?" Begin at the command of Jesus ; make the attempt ; divide what you have ; and the bread of God shall be multiplied in your hands, and all shall eat and be satisfied.

4. *Five barley loaves, and two small fishes*—When we are deeply conscious of our own necessities, we shall be led to depend on Jesus with a firmer faith. God often permits his servants to be brought low, that they may have repeated opportunities of proving the kindness and mercy of their gracious Lord and Master.

5. *Bring them hither to me*—No creature of God should be considered as good or safe without the blessing of God in it. If thou have but even a handful of meal and a few herbs, bring them to Christ by prayer and faith, and he will make them a suffi-

cleansing for thy body, and a sacrament to thy soul. Let the minister of the gospel attend also to this; let him bring all his gifts and graces to his Maker; let him ever know that his word can be of no use, unless the blessing of Christ be in it.

6. *He looked up to heaven*—To teach us to acknowledge God as the Supreme Good, and Fountain of all excellence.

7. *He blessed*—The word "God" should, I think, be rather inserted here than the word "them," because it does not appear that it was the loaves which Christ blessed, but that God who had provided them; and this indeed was the Jewish custom, not to bless the food, but the God who gave it. However, there are others who believe the loaves are meant, and that he blessed them in order to multiply them.

8. *They did all eat, and were filled*—Little or much is the same in the hands of Jesus Christ. Here was an incontestable miracle; five thousand men, besides women and children, fed with five cakes and two fishes! Here must have been a manifest creation of substance; the parts of the bread were not dilated to make them appear large, nor was there any delusion in the eating; for they all ate, and were all filled. Here then is one miracle of our Lord attested by at least five thousand persons! But did not this creation of bread prove the unlimited power of Jesus? Undoubtedly: And nothing less than eternal power and Godhead could have effected it. This miracle is mentioned by all the four evangelists. It is one of the most astonishing that Christ has wrought. It is a miracle which could not be counterfeited, and a full proof of the Divinity of Christ.

9. *Take him by force to make him a king*—The Jews had often suffered by famine, in those times in which their enemies were permitted to prevail over them; but, finding that Jesus had such power as

to multiply a few loaves to feed thousands, they took it for granted that, while he was at their head, no evil could possibly happen to them, and therefore were determined immediately to proclaim him king, and rid themselves at once of Herod and the Romans. Our Lord perceiving this, either by some words which they had dropped, or by his penetration of their hearts, retired before the project had been fully formed, or could be put into execution. It was not till a considerable time afterwards that even the disciples fully understood that his kingdom was not of this world. Worldly wisdom would have said, "Declare thyself king; yield to the desires of the people; this will be the readiest way of converting the Jews." No. Jesus must die for the sin of the world. No man's heart can be turned to God by outward pomp or splendour; no saving change can be brought about by any might or any power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts.

10. *He went up himself alone into a mountain to pray*—He whom God has employed in a work of mercy had need to return, by prayer, as speedily, to his Maker, as he can, lest he should be tempted to value himself on account of that in which he has no merit; for the good that is done upon earth, the Lord doeth it alone. Some make this part of our Lord's conduct emblematic of the spirit and practice of prayer, and observe that the proper dispositions and circumstances for praying well are: (1.) Retirement from the world. (2.) Elevation of the heart to God. (3.) Solitude. (4.) The silence and quiet of the night. It is certain that in this also Christ has left us an example that we should follow his steps. Retirement from the world is often a means of animating, supporting, and spiritualizing prayer. Other society should be shut out, when a soul comes to converse with God.

SECTION XCV.—CHRIST WALKS ON THE SEA.

A. D. 27. MATTHEW XIV. 24—36; MARK VI. 47—56; JOHN VI. 15—21.

AND when the even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea

toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land, and was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them, and the ship was tossed with waves. And about the fourth watch¹ of the night Jesus cometh unto them, when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, walking upon the sea,² and would have passed by them. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship, they supposed it had been a spirit;³ and cried out for fear: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.⁴ And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.⁵ And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water,⁶ to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid;⁷ and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand,⁸ and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Then they willingly received him into the ship. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased,⁹ and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. Then they that were in the ship were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: For their heart was hardened. *And* they came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, the men of that place had straightway knowledge of him; *and* they sent out into all that country round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was, and brought unto him all that were diseased.¹⁰ And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets;¹¹ and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment:¹² And as many as touched him were made perfectly whole.

1. *The fourth watch*—The first watch began at six o'clock in the evening, and continued till nine; the second began at nine, and continued till twelve; the third began at twelve, and continued till three next morning; and the fourth began at three, and continued till six. It was, therefore, between the hours of three and

six in the morning, that Jesus made this appearance to his disciples.

2. *Walking upon the sea*—Thus suspending the laws of gravitation was a proper manifestation of unlimited power. Jesus did this by his own power, therefore Jesus showed forth his Godhead. In this one miracle we may discover three: (1.) Though

at a distance from his disciples, he knew their distress. (2.) He found them out on the lake, and probably in the midst of darkness. (3.) He walked upon the water. Job, speaking of those things whereby the omnipotence of God was demonstrated, says particularly, chapter ix. 8, "He walketh upon the waves of the sea;" intimating that this was impossible to any thing but Omnipotence.

3. *Supposed it had been a spirit*—That the spirits of the dead might and did appear, was a doctrine held by the greatest and holiest of men that ever existed; and a doctrine which the cavillers—free-thinkers and bound-thinkers—of different ages have never been able to disprove.

4. *It is I; be not afraid*—Nothing but this voice of Christ could, in such circumstances, have given courage and comfort to his disciples: Those who are grievously tossed with difficulties and temptations require a similar manifestation of his power and goodness. When he proclaims himself in the soul, all sorrow, and fear, and sin are at an end.

5. *Bid me come unto thee on the water*—A weak faith is always wishing for signs and miracles. To take Christ at his word, argues not only the perfection of faith, but also the highest exercise of sound reason. He is to be credited on his own word, because he is the truth, and therefore can neither lie nor deceive.

6. *He walked on the water*—However impossible the thing commanded by Christ may appear, it is certain he will give power to accomplish it to those who receive his word by faith; but we must take care never to put Christ's power to the proof, for the gratification of a vain curiosity; or even for the strengthening of our faith, when the ordinary means for doing that are within our reach.

7. *When he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid*—It was by faith in the power of Christ he was upheld; when that faith failed by which the laws of gravitation were suspended, no wonder that those laws returned to their wonted action, and that he began to sink. It was not the violence of the winds, nor the raging of the waves, which endangered his life, but his littleness of faith.

8. *Jesus stretched forth his hand*—

Every moment we stand in need of Christ; while we stand, we are upheld by his power only; and when we are falling, or have fallen, we can be saved only by his mercy. Let us always take care that we do not consider so much the danger to which we are exposed, as the power of Christ by which we are to be upheld; and then our mountain is likely to stand strong.

9. *The wind ceased*—Jesus is the Prince of Peace; and all is peace and calm where he condescends to enter and abide.

10. *And brought unto him all that were diseased*—And Jesus received and healed every man and woman of them. And is not the soul, in the sight of God, of more value than the body? And will he withhold his healing power from the former, and grant it so freely to the latter? This cannot be. Let a man come himself to Jesus, and he shall be saved; and afterwards let him recommend this Christ to the whole circle of his acquaintance, and they, if they come, shall also find mercy. Christ went about doing good; he confined his ministry and miracles to no place. Wherever he went, they stood in need of his help; and whenever they required his assistance, they had it granted immediately. Our Lord's conduct in these respects is a perfect pattern for every preacher of his gospel.

11. *They laid the sick in the streets*—"What a scene! As he pursues his march of mercy, the sick lie before him along the streets and roads, in all the variety of disease, distortion, and pain; but, as he passes, they touch him and are healed; and he leaves behind him the monuments of his compassion, surrounded with their rejoicing friends, and all giving glory to God, saying, 'It was never so seen in Israel.'"—R. WATSON.

12. *Might touch if it were but the border of his garment*—What mighty influence must the grace and Spirit of Christ have in the soul, when even the border or hem of his garment produced such wonders in the bodies of those who touched it! Here is a man who has turned from sin to God through Christ, and the healing hand of Jesus is laid upon him: Then, no wonder that he knows and feels his sins forgiven, his soul purified, and his heart filled with the fulness of his Maker. Lord, increase our faith; and we shall see greater

manifestations of thy power and glory !
Amen.

On the subject of the disciples sailing off without Christ, and the storm that overtook them, it may be necessary to make a few observations, chiefly for the encouragement of the labourers in God's vineyard. It was the duty of the disciples to depart at the commandment of the Lord, though the storm was great, and the wind contrary. It was their duty to tug at the oar, expecting the appearing of their Lord and Master. So it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to embark, and sail even into the sea of persecution and dangerous trial, in order to save souls. There may be darkness for a time; they must row. The

waves may rise high; they must row on. The wind may be contrary; still they must tug at the oar. Jesus will appear, lay the storm, and calm the sea, and they shall have souls for their hire. The vessel will get to land; and speedily, too. There are particular times in which the Lord pours out his Spirit; and multitudes are quickly convinced and converted. "Alas!" says one, "I see no fruit of my labour; no return of my prayers and tears." Take courage, man; tug on; thou shalt not labour in vain, nor spend thy strength for nought. What he does thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Great grace and great peace await thee; take courage and tug on.

SECTION XCVI.—CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

A. D. 28.

JOHN VI. 22—40.

THE day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw ¹ the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat ² which perisheth, but for that meat ³ which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: For him hath God the Father sealed.⁴ Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe ⁵ on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? ⁶ what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; ⁷ as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; ⁸ but my Father giveth you the true bread from

heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.⁹ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life :¹⁰ He that cometh to me¹¹ shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me¹² shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.¹³ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will,¹⁴ but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing,¹⁵ but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me,¹⁶ that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : And I will raise him up at the last day.

1. *Ye seek me, not because ye saw, &c.*—Through the miracle of the loaves was one of the most astonishing that ever was wrought upon earth ; and though this people had, by the testimony of all their senses, the most convincing proof of its reality ; yet we find many of them paid little attention to it, and regarded the omnipotent hand of God in it no farther than it went to satisfy the demands of their appetite ! Most men are willing to receive temporal good from the hands of God ; but there are few, very few, who are willing to receive spiritual blessings.

2. *Labour not for the meat*—That is, for that only, but also “for the bread,” &c. Our Lord wills every man to be active and diligent in that employment in which providence has placed him ; but it is his will also, that that employment, and all the concerns of life, should be subservient to the interest of his soul.

3. *But for that meat, &c.*—He who labours not, in the work of his salvation, is never likely to enter into the kingdom of God. Though our labour cannot purchase it, either in whole or in part, yet it is the way in which God chooses to give salvation ; and he that will have heaven must strive for it. Every thing that can be possessed, except the salvation of God, is a perishing thing : This is its essential character : It can last to us no longer than the body lasts. But, when the earth and its produce are burnt up, this bread of Christ, his grace and salvation, will be

found remaining unto eternal life. This is the portion after which an immortal spirit should seek.

4. *Him hath God the Father sealed*—By this expression, our Lord points out the commission which, as the Messiah, he received from the Father, to be Prophet and Priest to an ignorant, sinful world. As a person who wishes to communicate his mind to another who is at a distance writes a letter, seals it with his own seal, and sends it directed to the person for whom it was written ; so Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, came to interpret the divine will to man, bearing the image, superscription, and seal of God, in the immaculate holiness of his nature, unsullied truth of his doctrine, and in the astonishing evidence of his miracles. But he came also as a Priest, to make an atonement for sin ; and the bread which nourishes unto eternal life, he tells us, is his body, which he gives for the life of the world ; and to this sacrifice of himself, the words, “Him hath God the Father sealed,” seem especially to relate.

5. *This is the work of God, that ye believe*—There is nothing you can be employed in more acceptable to God than in yielding to the evidence set before you, and acknowledging me as your Messiah, and the Saviour of a lost world.

6. *That we may see, and believe thee*—That, having seen the miracle, we may believe thee to be the promised Messiah. They had already seen the miracle of the

five loaves, and did not believe; and it was impossible for them to see any thing more descriptive of unlimited power and goodness. Even miracles themselves are lost on persons whose hearts are fixed on the perishing things of the world, and whose minds are filled with prejudice against the truth.

7. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert*—Their argument seems to run thus: "Thou hast, we grant, fed five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes; but what is this in comparison of what Moses did in the desert, who for forty years fed more than a million of persons with bread from heaven? Do something like this, and then we will believe in thee, as we have believed in Moses."

8. *Moses gave you not that bread from heaven*—Our Lord refutes the argument of the Jews, by proving: (1.) That it was not Moses, but God, who gave the manna. (2.) That this bread was not the true bread, but was merely a type of it. (3.) That God had given them now a bread infinitely more excellent. (4.) That himself is that heavenly nourishment of which he spake, and who was typified by the manna in the desert. To show that himself was the true bread from heaven, he proves two things: (i.) That his doctrine was the true nourishment of the soul, and that those who were to be put in possession of the blessings promised in it must come to God by faith. (ii.) That he would give his body for the life of the world: That as bread is the staff that supports the natural life of man, so the salvation procured by his death should be that by which the bodies and souls of believers should be preserved unto life eternal.

9. *Lord, evermore give us this bread*—Either meaning, "Let the miracle of the manna be renewed, and continue among us for ever;" or, "Let that bread, of which thou hast spoken, become our constant nourishment." The Jews expected that, when the Messiah should come, he would give them all manner of delicacies, and among the rest, manna, wine, and spicy oil.

10. *I am the bread of life*—That is, the bread which gives life, and preserves from death.

11. *He that cometh to me*—The person

who receives my doctrine, and believes in me as the great atoning Sacrifice, shall be perfectly satisfied, and never more feel misery of mind. All the guilt of his sins shall be blotted out, and his soul shall be purified unto God; and, being enabled to love him with all his heart, he shall rest, fully, supremely, and finally happy, in his God.

12. *All that the Father giveth me*—All that are drawn by the Father, all those who are influenced by his Spirit, and yield to those influences: "For as many as are led" (not driven or dragged) "by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." God sent his prophets to proclaim his salvation to this people; and he accompanied their preaching with the influence of his Spirit. Those who yielded were saved: Those who did not yield to these drawings were lost. This Spirit still continued to work and to allure; but the people, being uncircumcised both in heart and ears, they always resisted the Holy Ghost; as their fathers did, so did they: And though Christ would have gathered them together, as a hen would her chickens under her wings, yet they would not. Those who come at the call of God he is represented here as giving to Christ, because it is through his blood alone that they can be saved. God, by his Spirit, convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment; those who acknowledge their iniquity, and their need of salvation, he gives to Christ, that is, points out unto them the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

13. *I will in no wise cast out*—Our blessed Lord alludes to the case of a person in deep distress and poverty, who comes to a nobleman's house, in order to get relief: The person appears; and the owner, far from treating the poor man with asperity, welcomes, receives him kindly, and supplies his want. So does Jesus. Never did he reject the suit of a penitent, however grievous his crimes might have been. He is come to the house of mercy; he is lying at the threshold: The servants bid him come in; he obeys, and stands trembling, waiting for the appearing of the Master, doubtful whether he is to be received or rejected: The Master appears, and not only grants his suit, but receives

him into the number of his family: He alleges his unfitness, his unworthiness, his guilt, his crimes, his ingratitude: No matter, all shall be blotted out through the blood of the Lamb, and he be put among the children; and on none of these accounts shall he be put out of the house. The Gentiles shall be as welcome as the Jews; and the invitation to them be as free, as full, and as hearty: They shall become his adopted children, and never be cast out, as the Jews have been. O thou God of love! how able and willing art thou to save the vilest of the vile, who come unto thee! Thou art not the God of the Jews only; thou art also the God of the Gentiles. Rejoice, therefore, ye Gentiles, with his people.

14. *Not to do mine own will*—I am come, not to act according to human motives, passions, or prejudices; but according to infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy. Jewish passions and prejudices would reject publicans and sinners as those alluded to, and shut the gate of heaven against the Gentiles; but God's mercy receives them, and I am come to manifest that mercy to men.

15. *I should lose nothing*—It is the will of God that every soul who believes should continue in the faith, and have a resurrection unto life eternal. But he wills

this continuance in salvation, without purposing to force the persons so to continue. God may will a thing to be, without willing that it shall be. Judas was given to Christ by the Father, John xvii. 12. The Father willed that this Judas should continue in the faith, and have a resurrection unto life eternal: But Judas sinned and perished. Now it is evident that God willed that Judas might be saved, without willing that he must be saved infallibly and unconditionally. When a man is a worker together with the grace of God, he is saved; when he receives that grace of God in vain, he is lost; not through a lack of will or mercy in God, but through lack of his co-operation with divine grace.

16. *This is the will of him that sent me*—Lest they should take a wrong meaning out of his words, as many have done since, he tells them that, far from any person being excluded from his mercy, it was the will of God that every one who saw him might believe and be saved. The power, without which they could not believe, he freely gave them; but the use of that power was their own. God gives the grace of repentance and faith to every man; but he neither repents nor believes for any man. Each must repent for his own sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus, through the grace given, or perish.

SECTION XCVII.—THE NECESSITY OF FEEDING ON THE LIVING BREAD.

A. D. 28.

JOHN VI. 41—58.

THE Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: ¹ And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.² Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father,³ save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say

unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.⁴ I am that bread of life.⁵ Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.⁶ This is the bread⁷ which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give⁸ for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man,⁹ and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; ¹⁰ and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.¹¹ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.¹² As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: So he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.¹³ This is that bread which came down from heaven: Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

1. *Except the Father draw him*—"But how is a man drawn?" St. Augustin answers, "A man is attracted by that which he delights in. Show green herbage to a sheep, he is drawn by it; show nuts to a child, and he is drawn by them. They run wherever the person runs who shows these things; they run after him, but they are not forced to follow; they run, through the desire they feel to get the things they delight in. So God draws man: He shows him his wants,—he shows the Saviour whom he has provided for him: The man feels himself a lost sinner; and, through the desire which he finds to escape hell, and get to heaven, he comes unto Christ, that he may be justified by his blood. Unless God thus draw, no man will ever come to Christ; because none could, without this drawing, ever feel the need of a Saviour."

2. *They shall be all taught of God*—God teaches a man to know himself, that, finding his need of salvation, he may flee to lay hold on the hope which his heavenly Father has set before him in the gospel. God draws men by his love, and by showing them what his love has done for them. Fear repels, but love attracts. He who is ever preaching the terrors of th.

law, and representing God as a vindictive Judge, will never bring sinners to him. They are afraid of this terrible God; but they love him, "who so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

3. *Not that any man hath seen the Father*—He does not teach men by appearing personally before them, or by any other outward voice than that of his word and messengers; but he teaches by his Spirit. This teaching from God implies: (1.) That they shall have proper instruction. (2.) That they shall comprehend it; for, when God teaches, there is no delay in learning. And, (3.) That this teaching should be by the influence of the Holy Ghost upon their minds.

4. *Hath everlasting life*—He is entitled to this, on his believing me to be the Messiah, and trusting in me alone for salvation. Our blessed Lord recapitulates here what he had said in the preceding discourse: The person who is saved is, (1.) Drawn by the Father. (2.) Hears his instructions. (3.) Accepts the salvation offered. (4.) Is given to Christ Jesus, that he may be justified by faith. (5.) Is nou-

rished by the bread of life. (6.) Perseveres in the faith. (7.) Is not lost, but is raised up at the last day. And, (8.) Is made a partaker of eternal life.

5. *I am that bread of life*—I alone afford, by my doctrine and Spirit, that nourishment by which the soul is saved unto life eternal.

6. *Your fathers did eat manna, and are dead*—That bread neither preserved their bodies alive, nor entitled them to life eternal; but those who receive my salvation shall not only be raised again in the last day, but shall inherit eternal life. It was an opinion of the Jews themselves, that their fathers, who perished in the wilderness, should never have a resurrection. Our Lord takes them on their own ground: Ye acknowledge that your fathers, who fell in the wilderness, shall never have a resurrection; and yet they ate of the manna; therefore that manna is not the bread that preserves to everlasting life, according even to your own concession.

7. *This is the bread, &c.*—I am come for this very purpose, that men may believe in me, and have eternal life.

8. *Is my flesh, which I will give, &c.*—Our Lord explains his meaning more fully, in these words, than he had done before. Having spoken so much of the bread which feeds and nourishes the soul, and preserves from death, the attention of his hearers was fixed upon his words, which to them appeared inexplicable; and they desired to know what their meaning was. He then told them that the bread meant his flesh, (his life,) which he was about to give up to save the life of the world. Here our Lord plainly declares that his death was to be a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for the sin of the world; and that, as no human life could be preserved unless there was bread (proper nourishment) received, so no soul could be saved but by the merit of his death. Reader, remember this; it is one of the weightiest, and one of the truest and most important, sayings in the book of God.

9. *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man*—Unless ye be made partakers of the blessings about to be purchased by my blood, passion, and violent death, ye cannot be saved. As a man must eat bread and

flesh, in order to be nourished by them, so a man must receive the grace and Spirit of Christ, in order to his salvation. As food, in a rich man's store, does not nourish the poor man that needs it, unless it be given him, and he receive it into his stomach, so the whole fountain of mercy existing in the bosom of God, and uncommunicated, does not save a soul. He who is saved by it must be made a partaker of it. Our Lord's meaning appears to be, that, unless they were made partakers of the grace of that atonement which he was about to make by his death, they could not possibly be saved.

10. *Hath eternal life*—This can never be understood of the sacrament of the Lord's supper: (1.) Because this was not instituted till a year after; at the last pass-over. (2.) It cannot be said that those who do not receive that sacrament must perish everlastingly. (3.) Nor can it be supposed that all those who do receive it are necessarily and eternally saved. On the contrary, St. Paul intimates that many who received it at Corinth perished, because they received it unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body; not distinguishing between it and a common meal; and not properly considering that sacrifice for sin, of which the sacrament of the Lord's supper was a type.

11. *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*—Our Lord terms his flesh the "true meat," and his blood the "true drink," because those who received the grace merited by his death would be really nourished and supported thereby unto eternal life.

12. *Dwelleth in me, and I in him*—Of all connexions and unions, none is so intimate and complete as that which is effected by the digestion of aliments, because they are changed into the very substance of him who eats them; and this our Lord makes the model of that union which subsists between himself and genuine believers. He lives in them, and they in him; for they are made partakers of the divine nature.

13. *So he that eateth me, even he shall live by me*—From which we learn, that the union between Christ and his followers shall be similar to that which subsists between God and Christ.

SECTION XCVIII.—MANY OF THE DISCIPLES ARE OFFENDED.

A. D. 28.

JOHN VI. 59—71.

THESE things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?¹ When Jesus knew in himself² that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? *What* and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend³ up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth;⁴ the flesh profiteth nothing:⁵ The words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.⁶ And he said, Therefore said I unto you,⁷ that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?⁸ Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?⁹ thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon: For he it was that should betray him,¹⁰ being one of the twelve.

1. *This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*—Who can digest such doctrine as this? It is intolerable; it is impracticable. The wicked word of a lying world is in general better received than the holy word of the God of truth.

2. *Jesus knew in himself*—By giving them this proof that he knew their hearts, he also proved that he was God; that he could not be deceived himself, and that it was impossible for him to deceive any; consequently, that the doctrine he taught them must be the truth of God.

3. *If ye shall see the Son of Man ascend*—Ye need not be stumbled at what I say concerning eating my flesh and drinking my blood; for ye shall soon have the fullest proof that this is figuratively spoken; for I shall ascend with the same body with which I shall arise from the dead; therefore my flesh and blood, far from being eaten by men, shall not even be found among them.

4. *It is the Spirit that quickeneth*—It is the spiritual sense only of my words that is to be attended to, and through which life is to be attained. Such only as eat and drink what I have mentioned in a spiritual sense, are to expect eternal life.

5. *The flesh profiteth nothing*—If ye could even eat my flesh and drink my blood, this would not avail for your salvation. These words contain a caution, that the hearers should not understand his words in the strict literal sense, as if his body were really bread, and as if his flesh and blood were really to be eaten and drank.

6. *And who should betray him*—Or, “who would deliver him up.” Because he knew all things, he knew from the first, from Judas’s call to the apostleship, and from eternity, (if the reader pleases), who it was who would (not should) deliver him up into the hands of the Jews. “Should,” in the apprehension of most, implies necessity

and compulsion; "would," implies that he was under the influence of his own free will, without necessity or constraint. The former takes away his guilt; for what a man is irresistibly compelled to do by the supreme authority of God, he cannot avoid; and therefore, to him, no blame can attach. But Judas having acted through his own free will, abusing his power, and the grace he had received, he was guilty of the murder of an innocent man, and deserved the perdition to which he went.

7. *Therefore said I unto you*—None can come at first, unless he be drawn by the Father; and none can continue, unless he continue under those sacred influences which God gives only to those who do not receive his first graces in vain. St. Augustin himself grants, that it was the sole fault of these disciples that they did not believe, and were saved. If I be asked why these could not believe; I immediately answer, "Because they would not."

8. *Will ye also go away?*—Or, "Do ye also desire," &c. These words are very emphatical. Will you abandon me; you whom I have distinguished with innumerable marks of my affection; you whom I have chosen out of the world to be my companions; you to whom I have revealed the secrets of the eternal world; you who have been witnesses of all my miracles; you whom I intend to seat with me on my throne in glory; will you go away? Reader, in what state art thou? Hast thou gone back from Christ, or art thou going back? Wilt thou go; thou whom he has redeemed by his blood; thou whom he has upheld by his power, and fed by his providence; thou into whose wounded soul he has poured the balm of pardoning mercy; thou whom he has adopted into the heavenly family; thou whom he has comforted in so many tribulations and adversities; thou whose multiplied offences he has freely and fully pardoned; wilt thou go away?

"Do not exchange the Saviour's friendship for that of sin, that betrayer of the souls of men. In the distance, I know she is exceeding fair; the bloom of health seems on her cheek; a gaudy drapery enfolds her frame; she moves with alluring steps; in her hand she holds a radiant cup, boasts it is filled with nectar, and bids you drink and be happy. Approach her

not. Sulphureous smells her breath; her bones are rotten, and consumption licks her blood; in her bowels plague and fever lurk; and the worm that never dies nestles in her heart. Who touches, dies. Shall we turn away from the Giver of life, to make a covenant with this minister of death?"—BROMLEY.

9. *Simon Peter answered*—With his usual zeal and readiness, speaking in behalf of the whole: "To whom shall we go?" Where shall we find a more gracious Master, a more powerful Redeemer, a more suitable Saviour? Thou alone "hast the words of eternal life;" none can teach the doctrine of salvation but thyself; and none can confer the gift of eternal life but thou alone. Reader, let me ask, Whither art thou going? Has the world, the devil, the flesh, the words of eternal life? Art thou turning thy back upon God and Christ? For thy zealous services, what has satan to give thee? Death, hell, and eternal misery. O stop! Cleave to Jesus; he will give thee that happiness which, in vain, thou seekest in the pleasures of sin.

10. *He spake of Judas: For he it was that should betray him*—By referring to this matter so often, did not our blessed Lord intend to warn Judas? Was not the evil fully exposed to his view? And who dare say, that it was impossible for him to avoid what he had so often been warned against? When the temptation did take place, and his heart, in purpose, had brought forth the sin, might he not have relented, fallen at his injured Master's feet, acknowledged his black offence, and implored forgiveness? And surely his most merciful Lord would have freely pardoned him.

When a man forsakes the living God, and gives way to avarice, (which appears to have been the case with Judas,) he is fit for any thing in which satan may choose to employ him. Beware of the love of money. The cursed lust of gold induced a disciple of Christ to betray his God; and has it not been the ruin of millions since? Few people love money merely for its own sake; they love it because it can provide them with the necessaries, conveniences, and comforts of life. Those who have not God for their portion, incessantly long after these things, and therefore are covetous. While a man watches unto prayer, and

abides in the love of Christ Jesus the Lord, so long he is safe, for he is contented with the lot which God has given him in life. Reader, art thou like Judas in his best state, put in trust for the poor, or for the church of Christ? Do not covet; and take heed that thou grudge not, nor permit thy heart to be hardened by repeated sights and tales of woe. Thou art but a steward; act faithfully, and act affectionately. Because the ointment that prefigured the

death of our Lord was not applied just as Judas would have it, he took offence; betrayed and sold his Master; saw, and wished to remedy his transgression; despaired, and hanged himself. Behold the fruit of covetousness! To what excesses and miseries the love of money may lead, God alone can comprehend. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

SECTION XCIX.—JESUS CHRIST CONVICTS THE PHARISEES OF HYPOCRISY.

A. D. 28.

MATTHEW XV. 1—9; MARK VII. 1—13.

THEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.¹ And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to, but transgress, the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands² when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment³ of God by your tradition? For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: And many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For God commanded *by Moses*, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother: And, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift,⁴ by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to honour, *or to* do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect by your tradition, which ye have delivered: And many such like things do ye. *Ye* hypocrites, well hath Esaias prophesied of you,⁵ as it is written, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.⁶ Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching⁷ *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

1. *Came from Jerusalem*—Probably for the express purpose of disputing with Christ, that they might entangle him in his talk. Malice and envy are never idle; they incessantly hunt the person they intend to make their prey.

2. *For they wash not their hands*—What frivolous nonsense! These Pharisees had nothing which their malice could fasten on in the conduct or doctrine of our blessed Lord and his disciples, and therefore they must dispute about washing of hands! All sorts of Pharisees are troublesome people in religious society; and the reason is, they take more pleasure in blaming others than in amending themselves.

3. *Why do ye also transgress the commandment*—Ye accuse my disciples of transgressing the traditions of the elders; I accuse you of transgressing the commands of God, and that too in favour of your own tradition; thus preferring the inventions of men to the positive precepts of God. Pretenders to zeal often prefer superstitious usages to the divine law, and human inventions to the positive duties of Christianity.

4. *A gift*—An “offering of approach;” something consecrated to the service of God in the temple, by which a man had the privilege of approaching his Maker. This conduct was similar to the custom of certain persons who bequeath the inheritance of their children to churches or religious uses; either through terror of conscience, thus striving to purchase the kingdom of glory; or through the persuasion of interested hireling priests. It was in this way that, in the days of popish influence, the principal lands in the nation had fallen into the hands of the church. It is sacrilege to dedicate that to God which is taken away from the necessities of our parents and children; and the good that this pretends to will doubtless be found in the catalogue of that unnatural man’s crimes, in the judgment of the great day, who has thus deprived his own family of its due. To assist our poor relatives, is our first duty; and this is a work infinitely preferable to all pious legacies and endowments.

5. *Hypocrites, well hath Esaias prophesied of you*—Our blessed Lord unmasketh these hypocrites; and we may observe that, when a hypocrite is found out, he should be

exposed to all; this may lead to his salvation: If he be permitted to retain his falsely-acquired character, how can he escape perdition?

6. *Their heart is far from me*—The true worship of God consists in the union of the heart to him; where this exists not, a particle of the spirit of devotion cannot be found.

7. *In vain do they worship me, &c.*—By the traditions of the elders, not only the word of God was perverted, but his worship also was greatly corrupted. But the Jews were not the only people who have acted thus; whole Christian churches, as well as sects and parties, have acted in the same way. Men must not mould the worship of God according to their fancy; it is not what they think will do, is proper, innocent, &c., but what God himself has prescribed, that he will acknowledge as his worship. However sincere a man may be in a worship of his own invention, or of man’s commandment, yet it profits him nothing. Christ himself says it is “in vain.” To condemn such, may appear to some illiberal; but whatever may be said in behalf of sincere Heathens, and others who have not had the advantages of divine revelation, there is no excuse for the man who has the Bible before him.

We see the extreme superstition, envy, and incurable ill-nature of the Jews. While totally lost to a proper sense of the spirituality of God’s law, they are ceremonious in the extreme. They will not eat without washing their hands, because this would be a transgression of one of the traditions of their elders; but they can harbour the worst tempers and passions, and thus break the law of God! The word of man weighs more with them than the testimony of Jehovah; and yet they pretend the highest respect for their God and sacred things, and will let their parents perish for lack of the necessaries of life, that they may have goods to vow to the service of the sanctuary! Pride and envy blind the hearts of men, and cause them often to act not only the most wicked, but the most ridiculous, parts. He who takes the book of God for the rule of his faith and practice can never go astray: But to the mazes and perplexities produced by the traditions of elders, human creeds, and confessions of faith,

thou blind? Then come to Jesus that he may restore thee. Hast thou a measure of light? Then pray that he may lay his hands again on thee, that thou mayest be enabled to read thy title clear to the heavenly inheritance.

SECTION CVI.—PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XVI. 13—20; MARK VIII. 27—30;
LUKE IX. 18—21.

AND Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the coasts *and* towns of Cæsarea Philippi: And by the way it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: And he asked them, saying, Whom do men say¹ that I the Son of Man am? And they answered, and said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elias; and others, Jeremias: And others *say*, that one of the old prophets is risen again. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said unto him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.² And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:³ For flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter,⁴ and upon this rock⁵ I will build my church; and the gates of hell⁷ shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom⁸ of heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then he straitly charged and commanded his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

1. *Whom do men say*—He asked his disciples this question, not because he was ignorant what the people thought and spoke of him; but to have the opportunity, in getting an express declaration of their faith from themselves, to confirm and strengthen them in it.

2. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*—Every word here is emphatic; a most concise, and yet comprehensive, confession of faith. "The Christ," or "Messiah," points out his Divinity, and shows his office; "the Son" designates his person: On this account it is that both are joined together so frequently in the new covenant. "Living;" a character applied to the Supreme Being, not only to distinguish him from the dead idols of Paganism, but also to point him out as

the Source of life, present, spiritual, and eternal.

3. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona*—Or, "Simon, son of Jonah:" "Flesh and blood," that is, "man:" No human being hath revealed this. Is it not evident, from our Lord's observation, that it requires an express revelation of God in a man's soul, to give him a saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ; and that not even the miracles of our Lord, wrought before the eyes, will effect this? The darkness must be removed from the heart by the Holy Spirit, before a man can become wise unto salvation.

4. *Thou art Peter*—This was the same as if he had said, "I acknowledge thee for one of my disciples;" for this name was given him by our Lord when he first

called him to the apostleship. "Peter" signifies a "stone," or "fragment of a rock;" and our Lord, whose constant custom it was to rise to heavenly things through the medium of earthly, takes occasion from the name, the metaphorical meaning of which was strength and stability, to point out the solidity of the confession, and the stability of that cause which should be founded on "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

5. *Upon this rock*—This true confession of thine, that I am the Messiah, that am come to reveal and communicate the living God, that the dead, lost world may be saved; upon this very rock, myself, thus confessed, "will I build my church;" alluding probably to Psalm cxviii. 22: "The Stone which the builders rejected is become the Head-stone of the corner;" and to Isaiah xxviii. 16, "Behold I lay a Stone in Zion for a Foundation."

6. *I will build my church*—"My assembly, or congregation;" that is, of persons who are made partakers of this precious faith. That Peter is not designed in our Lord's words, must be evident to all who are not blinded by prejudice. Peter was only one of the builders in this sacred edifice, who, himself tells us, with the rest of the believers, was built on this living foundation Stone: Therefore Jesus Christ did not say, "On thee, Peter," will I build my church; but changes immediately the expression, and says, "upon that very rock," to show that he neither addressed Peter, nor any other of the apostles. So, the supremacy of Peter, and the infallibility of the church of Rome, must be sought in some other scripture; for they certainly are not to be found in this.

7. *The gates of hell*—That is, the machinations and powers of the invisible world. In ancient times the gates of fortified cities were used to hold councils in, and were usually places of great strength. Our Lord's expression means, that neither the plots, stratagems, nor strength of satan and his angels should ever so far prevail as to destroy the sacred truths in the above confession. Sometimes the gates are taken for the troops which issue out from them: We may firmly believe, that, though hell should open her gates, and vomit out her devil and all his angels, to fight against Christ and

his saints, ruin and discomfiture must be the consequence on their part; as the arm of the Omnipotent must prevail.

8. *The keys of the kingdom*—By the "kingdom of heaven," we may consider the true church, that house of God, to be meant; and by the "keys," the power of admitting into that house, or of preventing any improper person from coming in. In other words, the doctrine of salvation, and the full declaration of the way in which God will save sinners; and who they are that shall be finally excluded from heaven; and on what account. Tell no man that "I am the Christ," that is, the Messiah; as the time for his full manifestation was not yet come; and he was not willing to provoke the Jewish malice, or the Roman envy, by permitting his disciples to announce him as the Saviour of a lost world. He chose rather to wait, till his resurrection and ascension had set this truth in the clearest light, and beyond the power of successful contradiction.

"The kingdom of heaven is the church of God. Formerly the Jewish church was that kingdom; it is now the Christian church. The true church is represented in verse 18, as in many passages of holy writ, under the image of a walled city, to be entered only at the gates. Under the Mosaic economy those gates were shut, and particular persons only could gain admittance; Israelites by birth, or by legal incorporation. The locks of these gates were the rites of the Mosaic law, which obstructed the entrance of aliens. But after our Lord's ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the keys of the city were given to St. Peter, by that vision which taught him, and authorized him to teach others, that all distinctions of one nation from another were at an end. By virtue of this special commission, the great apostle applied the key, pushed back the bolt of the lock, and threw the gates of the city open for the admission of the whole Gentile world, in the instance of Cornelius and his family. To this, and to this only, our Lord prophetically alludes, when he promises to St. Peter the custody of the keys. No authority over the rest of the apostles was given to St. Peter, by the promise made to him in either, or in both its branches; nor was any right conveyed to him, which could descend

thoughts, murders, &c., these defile the soul, because they have their seat and operation in it.

We wonder at the dulness of the disciples, when we find that they did not fully understand our Lord's meaning, in the very obvious parable about the blind leading the blind. But should we not be equally struck with their prying, inquisitive temper? They did not understand, but they could not rest till they did. They knew that their Lord could say nothing that had not the most important meaning in it: This meaning, in the preceding parable,

they had not apprehended, and therefore they wish to have it further explained by himself. Do we imitate their docility and eagerness to comprehend the truth of God? Christ presses every occurrence into a means of instruction. The dulness of the disciples, in the present case, has been the means of affording us the fullest instruction on a point of the utmost importance—the state of a sinful heart, and how the thoughts and passions conceived in it defile and pollute it; and how necessary it is to have the fountain purified, that it may cease to send forth those streams of death.

SECTION CI.—CHRIST HEALS THE DAUGHTER OF A CANAANITISH WOMAN.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XV. 21—28; MARK VII. 24—30.

THEN Jesus arose and went thence, and departed into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: But he could not be hid. For, behold, a *certain* woman of Canaan,¹ (the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation;) whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came out of the same coasts, and fell at his feet, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me,² O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word.³ And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep⁴ of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But Jesus answered and said unto her, Let the children first be filled: For it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, truth, Lord:⁵ Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith:⁶ For this saying be it unto thee even as thou wilt. Go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was made whole⁷ from that very hour. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

1. *A certain woman of Canaan*—Matthew gives her this name because of the people from whom she sprung, the descendants of Canaan; but Mark calls her "a Syrophenician," because of the country

where she dwelt. The state of this woman is a proper emblem of the state of a sinner, deeply conscious of the misery of his soul.

2. *Have mercy on me, &c.*—How proper is this prayer for a penitent! There are

many excellencies contained in it: (1.) It is short; (2.) Humble; (3.) Full of faith; (4.) Fervent; (5.) Modest; (6.) Respectful; (7.) Rational; (8.) Relying only on the mercy of God; (9.) Persevering. Can he who sees himself a slave of the devil beg with too much earnestness to be delivered from his thralldom?

3. *He answered her not a word*—Seemed to take time to consider her request, and to give her the opportunity of exercising her faith, and manifesting her fervour.

4. *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep*—By the divine appointment, I am come to preach the gospel to the Jews only. There are certain preachers who should learn a lesson of important instruction from this part of our Lord's conduct. As soon as they hear of a lost sheep being found by other ministers, they give all diligence to get that one into their fold; but display little earnestness in seeking in the wilderness for those that are lost. This conduct, perhaps, proceeds from a consciousness of their inability to perform the work of an evangelist; and leads them to sit down in the labours of others, rather than submit to the reproach of presiding over empty chapels. Such persons should either dig or beg immediately, as they are a reproach to the pastoral office; for, not being sent of God, they cannot profit the people. The wilderness of this world is sufficiently wide and uncultivated. Sinners abound every where; and there is ample room for all truly religious people, who have zeal for God, and love for their perishing fellow-creatures, to put forth all their strength, employ all their time, and exercise all their talents, in proclaiming the gospel of God; not only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," but to a lost world. Nor can such exertions be unsuccessful. Where the pure truth of God is preached, many will be converted. Where that truth is preached, though with a mixture of error, some will be converted, for God will bless his own truth. But where nothing but false doctrine is preached, no soul is converted: For God will never sanction error by a miracle of his mercy.

5. *Truth, Lord*—This appears to be

not so much an assent, as a bold reply to our Lord's reason for apparently rejecting her suit. "The little dogs share with the children; for they eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. I do not desire what is provided for these highly-favoured children, only what they leave: A single exertion of thy almighty power, in the healing of my afflicted daughter, is all that I wish for; and this the highly-favoured Jews can well spare, without lessening the provision made for themselves." Is not this the sense of this noble woman's reply?

6. *O woman, great is thy faith*—The hinderances thrown in this woman's way only tended to increase her faith. Her faith resembles a river, which becomes enlarged by the dykes opposed to it, till at last it sweeps them entirely away with it.

7. *Her daughter was made whole*—Persevering faith and prayer are next to omnipotent. No person can thus pray and believe, without receiving all his soul requires. This is one of the finest lessons in the book of God for a penitent, or for a discouraged believer. Look to Jesus! As sure as God is in heaven, so surely will he hear and answer thee to the eternal salvation of thy soul! Be not discouraged at a little delay: When thou art properly prepared to receive the blessing, then thou shalt have it. Look up; thy salvation is at hand. Jesus admires this faith, to the end that we may admire and imitate it, and may reap the same fruits and advantages from it. The case of the Canaanitish woman is, in itself, a thousand sermons: Her faith, her prayers, her perseverance, her success, the honour she received from her Lord, &c. &c.—how instructively, how powerfully do these speak and plead! What a profusion of light does this single case throw upon the manner in which Christ sometimes exercises the faith and patience of his followers! They that seek shall find, is the great lesson inculcated in this short history: God is ever the same. Reader, follow on after God, cry, pray, plead; all in him is for thee! Thou canst not perish, if thou continuest to believe and pray. The Lord will help thee.

SECTION CII.—CHRIST HEALS MANY DISEASED PEOPLE.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XV. 29—31; MARK VII. 31—37.

AND again Jesus departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the sea of Galilee through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears,¹ and he spit, and touched his tongue;² and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well:³ He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. And he went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed,*⁴ and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered,⁵ when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: And they glorified the God of Israel.

1. *And he took him aside from the multitude, and [the deaf man] put his fingers into his ears.*—Intimating thereby to Christ that they were so stopped that he could not hear. "And having spat out," that there might be nothing remaining in his mouth to offend the sight, when Christ should look at his tongue, "he touched his tongue," showing to Christ that it was so bound, that he could not speak; "and he looked up to heaven," as if to implore assistance from above; "and he groaned," being distressed because of his present affliction, and thus implored relief; for, not being able to speak, he could only groan and look up, expressing by these signs, as well as he could, his afflicted state, and the desire he had to be relieved. Then Jesus, having compassion upon him, said, "Be opened; and immediately his ears were opened," so that he could hear distinctly; and the impediment to his speaking was removed, so that he spake properly.

2. *And he spit, and touched his tongue*—This place is exceedingly difficult. There is scarcely an action of our Lord's life but one can see an evident reason for, except this. Various interpretations are given of it; none of them satisfies my mind. The Abbé Giradeau spiritualizes it thus: "(1.) 'He took him aside from the multitude:' When Christ saves a sinner, he separates him from all his old evil companions, and from the spirit and maxims of an ungodly world. (2.) 'He put his fingers into his ears,' to show that they could be opened only by the finger, that is, the power of God; and that they should be shut to every word and voice but what came from him. (3.) 'Spitting out he touched his tongue,' to show that his mental taste and relish should be entirely changed; that he should detest those things which he before esteemed, and esteem those which he before hated. (4.) 'Looking up to heaven,' to signify that all help comes from God, and to teach the

new convert to keep continually looking to, and depending upon, him. (5.) 'He groaned,' to show the wretched state of man by sin, and how tenderly concerned God is for his present and eternal welfare; and to intimate that men should seek the salvation of God in the spirit of genuine repentance, with strong crying and tears. (6.) 'He said, Be opened.' Sin is a shutting of the ears against the words of God; and a tying of the tongue, to render it incapable of giving God due praise. But when the all-powerful grace of Christ reaches the heart, the ear is unstopped, and the man hears distinctly; the tongue is unloosed, and the man speaks correctly." After all, it is possible that what is attributed here to Christ belongs to the person who was cured.

3. *He hath done all things well*—This has been, and ever will be, true of every part of our Lord's conduct. In creation, providence, and redemption, he hath done all things well. The wisest philosophers are agreed that, considering creation as a whole, it would be impossible to improve it. Every thing has been made in number, weight, and measure; there really is nothing deficient, nothing redundant; and the good of the creature seems evidently more consulted than the glory of the Creator. The creature's good is every where apparent; but to find out how the Creator is glorified by these works, requires the eye of the philosopher. And as he has done all things well in creation, so has he in providence; here also every thing is in number, weight, measure, and time. As creation shows his majesty, so providence shows his bounty. He preserves every thing he has made; all depend upon him, and by him are all things supported. But how glorious does he appear in the work of redemption! How magnificent, ample, and adequate the provision made for the salvation of a lost world! Here, as in providence, is enough for all, a sufficiency for each, and an abundance for eternity. He loves every man, and hates nothing that he has made; nor can the God of all grace be less beneficent than the Creator and Preserver of the universe.

4. *Those that were maimed*—What an astonishing manifestation of omnific and creative energy must the re-production of a hand, foot, &c., be, at the word or touch of Jesus! As this was a mere act of cre-

ative power, like that of multiplying the bread, those who allow that the above is the meaning of the word will hardly attempt to doubt the proper Divinity of Christ. Creation, in any sense of the word,—that is, causing something to exist that had no existence before,—can belong only to God, because it is an effect of an unlimited power. To say that such power could be delegated to a person, is to say that the person to whom it is delegated becomes, for the time being, the omnipotent God; and that God who has thus clothed a creature with his omnipotence ceases to be omnipotent himself; for there cannot be two Omnipotents; nor can the Supreme Being delegate his omnipotence to another, and have it at the same time. I confess, then, that this is, to me, an unanswerable argument for the Divinity of our blessed Lord. Others may doubt; I cannot help believing.

5. *The multitude wondered*—And well they might, when they had such proofs of the miraculous power and love of God before their eyes. Blessed be God, the same miracles are continued in their spiritual reference! All the disorders of the soul are still cured by the power of Jesus.

"It was not the astonishment of ignorance; it was an astonishment upon principle and upon knowledge. It was not the astonishment of those who saw a thing done which they thought utterly unaccountable. They knew how to account for it; they knew that the finger of God himself was the efficient cause of what they saw; and to that cause they, without hesitation, yet not hastily and in surprise, but upon the most solid principles of belief, referred it. It was not the astonishment of those who see a thing done which they thought would never come to pass: It was the astonishment of those who find a hope which they had entertained of something very extraordinary to be done, satisfied in a degree equal to, or beyond, their utmost expectations. It was the astonishment of those who saw an extraordinary thing, which they expected to take place some time or other, but knew not exactly when, accomplished in their own times, and under their own inspection. It was that sort of astonishment which any of us who firmly expect the second coming of our Lord, but knowing not the times and the seasons which the

Father hath put in his own power, look not for it at any definite time; it was that sort of astonishment which we should feel, if we saw the sign of the Son of Man this moment displayed in the heavens."—BISHOP HORSLEY.

SECTION CIII.—CHRIST FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND MEN.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XV. 32—39; MARK VIII. 1—10.

IN those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: For divers of them came from far. And his disciples say unto him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness? Whence should we have so much bread,¹ as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, to set before *them*; and they did set *them* before the people. And they did all eat, and were filled:² And they took up of the broken *meat* that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.³ And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the coasts of Magdala, into the parts of Dalmanutha.

1. *Whence should we have so much bread, &c.*—Human foresight, even in the followers of Christ, is very short. In a thousand instances, if we supply not its deficiency by faith, we shall be always embarrassed, and often miserable. This world is a desert, where nothing can be found to satisfy the soul of man, but the salvation which Christ has procured.

2. *They did all eat, and were filled*—“They were satisfied.” The husks of worldly pleasures may fill the man, but cannot satisfy the soul. A man may eat, and not be satisfied: It is the interest therefore of every follower of Christ to follow him till he be fed, and to feed on him till he be satisfied.

3. *Four thousand men, beside women and children*—Let the poor learn from

these miracles to trust in God for support. Whatever his ordinary providence denies, his miraculous power will supply.

All the subjects contained in this chapter are very interesting; but particularly the miraculous feeding of the multitudes, which is a full, unequivocal proof of the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ: In this miracle he truly appears in his creative energy, with which he has associated the tenderest benevolence and humanity. The subject of such a Prince must ever be safe; the servant of such a Master must ever have kind usage; the follower of such a Teacher can never want, nor go astray.

“So evidently true is it, that ‘man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!’ How wonderful did the power of Christ

appear in thus multiplying the food! And how amiable his compassion, in his affectionate concern for the relief of his necessitous followers! The disciples received, from the hands of Christ, the food they delivered to the people; and so should ministers be concerned, that they may receive from Christ what they dispense to others as the

bread of life, and that they also, at the same time, may live upon it, as the support of their own souls. How great an honour is it to be employed as stewards of the mysteries of God! Let not immoderate secular cares, let not the desire of worldly riches or greatness, interrupt us in this blessed work!"—DODDRIDGE.

SECTION CIV.—THE PHARISEES REQUIRE A SIGN.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XVI. 1—12; MARK VIII. 11—21.

THE Pharisees also with the Sadducees¹ came forth, and began to question with him, tempting,² and desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening,³ ye say, *It will be* fair weather: For the sky is red. And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day. For the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this wicked and adulterous generation⁴ seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. Then Jesus charged them, saying, Take heed and beware of the leaven⁵ of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread. *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves⁶ among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand⁷ that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

1. *The Pharisees also with the Sadducees*—These sects, however opposed among themselves, most cordially unite in their opposition to Christ and his truth. That the kingdom of satan may not fall, all his subjects must fight against the doctrine and maxims of the kingdom of Christ.

2. *Began to question with him, tempting*—Feigning a desire to have his doctrine fully proved to them, that they might credit it and become his disciples; but having no other design than to betray and ruin him.

3. *When it is evening*—There are certain signs of fair and foul weather, which ye are in the constant habit of observing, and which do not fail. "The signs of the times;" the doctrine which I preach, and the miracles which I work among you, are as sure signs that the Day-spring from on high has visited you for your salvation; but if ye refuse to hear, and continue in darkness, the red and gloomy cloud of vindictive justice shall pour out such a storm of wrath upon you as shall sweep you from the face of the earth.

4. *Wicked and adulterous generation*—The Jewish people are represented in the sacred writings as married to the Most High; but, like a dialoyal wife, forsaking their true husband, and uniting themselves to satan and sin. "Seeketh after a sign;" "seeketh sign upon sign;" or "still another sign." Our blessed Lord had already wrought miracles sufficient to demonstrate both his divine mission and his Divinity; only one was farther necessary to take away the scandal of his cross and death, to fulfil the scriptures, and to establish the Christian religion; and that was, his resurrection from the dead, which he here states was typified in the case of Jonah.

5. *Beware of the leaven*—Bad doctrines act in the soul as leaven does in meal; they assimilate the whole spirit to their own nature. A man's particular creed has a greater influence on his tempers and conduct than most are aware of. Pride, hypocrisy, and worldly-mindedness, which constituted the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, ruin the major part of the world.

6. *When I brake the five loaves, &c.*—How astonishing is it that these men should have any fear of lacking bread, after having seen the two miracles which our

blessed Lord alludes to above! Though men quickly perceive their bodily wants, and are querulous enough till they get them supplied, yet they as quickly forget the mercy which they had received; and thus God gets few returns of gratitude for his kindnesses. To make men, therefore, deeply sensible of his favours, he is induced to suffer them often to be in want, and then to supply them in such a way as to prove that their supply has come immediately from the hand of their bountiful Father.

7. *How is it that ye do not understand*—We are not deficient in spiritual knowledge because we have not had sufficient opportunities of acquainting ourselves with God, but because we do not improve the advantages we had. How deep and ruinous must our ignorance be, if God did not give line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little! They now perceived that he warned them against the superstition of the Pharisees, which produced hypocrisy, pride, envy, &c., and the false doctrine of the Sadducees, which denied the existence of a spiritual world, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the providence of God.

The disciples, by being constantly with their Master, were not only guarded against error, but were taught the whole truth. We should neglect no opportunity of waiting upon God; while Jesus continues to teach, our ear and heart should be open to receive his instructions. That what we have already received may be effectual, we must continue to hear and pray on. Let us beware of the error of the Pharisees! They minded only external performances, and those things by which they might acquire esteem and reputation among men; thus, humility and love, the very soul of religion, were neglected by them: They had their reward;—the approbation of those who were as destitute of vital religion as themselves. Let us beware also of the error of the Sadducees, who, believing no other felicity but what depended on the good things of this world, became the flatterers and slaves of those who could bestow them, and so, like the Pharisees, had their portion only in this life. All false religions and false principles conduct to the same end, however contrary they appear to each other. No two sects could be more opposed

to each other than the Sadducees and Pharisees, yet their doctrines led to the same end—they are both wedded to this world, and separated from God in the next.

The necessity of keeping the doctrine of the gospel uncorrupt, is strongly inculcated in the caution to avoid the leaven of the

Pharisees and of Herod. The doctrine of the cross must not only be observed and held inviolate, but that doctrine must never be mixed with worldly politics. Time-serving is abominable in the sight of God; it shows that the person has either no fixed principle of religion, or that he is not under the influence of any.

SECTION CV.—CHRIST HEALS A BLIND MAN.

A. D. 28.

MARK VIII. 22—26.

AND he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him,¹ and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand,² and led him out of the town;³ and when he had spit on his eyes,⁴ and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: And he was restored, and saw every man clearly.⁵ And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

1. *They bring a blind man unto him*—Christ went about to do good, and wherever he came he found some good to be done; and so should we, if we had a proper measure of the same zeal and love for the welfare of the bodies and souls of men.

2. *And he took the blind man by the hand*—Giving him a proof of his readiness to help him, and thus preparing him for the cure which he was about to work.

3. *Led him out of the town*—Thus showing the inhabitants that he considered them unworthy of having another miracle wrought among them. He had already deeply deplored their ingratitude and obstinacy. When a people do not make a proper improvement of the light and grace which they receive from God, their candlestick is removed; even the visible church becomes there extinct; and the candle is put out; no more means of spiritual illumination are afforded to the unfaithful inhabitants.

4. *When he had spit on his eyes*—It is likely this was done merely to separate the eyelids; as, in certain cases of blindness, they are found always gummed together. It required a miracle to restore the sight, and this was done in consequence of Christ

having laid his hands upon the blind man: It required no miracle to separate the eyelids, and, therefore, natural means only were employed; this was done by rubbing them with spittle; but whether by Christ, or by the blind man, is not absolutely certain. It has always been evident that false miracles have been wrought without reason or necessity, and without any obvious advantage; and they have thereby been detected: On the contrary, true miracles have always vindicated themselves by their obvious utility and importance; nothing ever being effected by them that could be performed by natural means.

5. *And saw every man clearly*—Our Lord could have restored this man to sight in a moment; but he chose to do it in the way mentioned in the text, to show that he is sovereign of his own graces; and to point out that, however insignificant means may appear in themselves, they are divinely efficacious when he chooses to work by them; and that, however small the first manifestations of mercy may be, they are nevertheless the beginnings of the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. Reader, art thou in this man's state? Art

there is no end. These evils existed in the Christian as well as in the Jewish church; but the Reformation, thank God! has liberated us from this endless system of uncertainty and absurdity, and the Sun of righteousness shines now unclouded! The plantation which God did not plant, in the course of his judgments, he has now swept nearly away from the face of the earth! Babylon is fallen!

SECTION C.—WHAT RENDERS MEN UNCLEAN.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XV. 10—20; MARK VII. 14—23.

AND when he had called all the people, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: ¹ There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth ² a man; but the things which come out of him: That which cometh out of the mouth, ³ this defileth a man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, ⁴ after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: ⁵ They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, ⁶ both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. ⁷ And Jesus said unto them, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth at the mouth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, But that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man: For those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For from within, out of the heart ⁸ of men, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, false witness, blasphemies, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and these are *the things* which defile the man: ⁹ But to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

1. *Hearken and understand*—A most important command. "Hearken;" make it a point of conscience to attend to the ministry of the word. "Understand;" be not satisfied with attending places of public worship merely; see that the teaching be of God, and that you lay it to heart.

2. *Not that which goeth into the mouth*

defileth—This is an answer to the carping question of the Pharisees, "Why do thy disciples eat with unwashed hands?" To which our Lord here replies, that "what goes into the mouth defiles not the man;" that is, that if, in eating with unwashed hands, any particles of dust, &c., cleaving to the hands, might happen to be taken

into the mouth with the food, this did not defile, did not constitute a man a sinner; for it is on this alone the question hinges: "Thy disciples eat with unwashed hands;" therefore they are sinners; for they transgress the tradition of the elders, that is, the oral law, which they considered equal in authority to the written law; and, indeed, often preferred the former to the latter, so as to make it of none effect, totally to destroy its nature and design, as we have often seen in the preceding notes.

3. *That which cometh out of the mouth*—That is, what springs from a corrupt, unregenerate heart; a perverse will and impure passions; "these defile," that is, make him a sinner.

4. *The Pharisees were offended*—None so liable to take offence as formalists and hypocrites, when you attempt to take away the false props from the one, and question the sincerity of the other. Besides, a Pharisee must never be suspected of ignorance; for they are the men, and wisdom must die with them!

5. *Let them alone*—These words have been sadly misunderstood. Some have quoted them to prove that blind and deceitful teachers should not be pointed out to the people, nor the people warned against them; and that men should abide in the communion of a corrupt church, because that church had once been the church of God, and in it they had been brought up; and to prove this they bring scripture, for, in our present translation, the words are rendered, "Let them alone:" But the whole connexion of the place evidently proves that our blessed Lord meant, "Give them up," have no kind of religious connexion with them; and the strong reason for which he immediately adds, because they are "blind leaders." This passage does not at all mean that blind leaders should not be pointed out to the people, that they may avoid being deceived by them; for this our Lord does frequently, and warns his disciples, and the people in general, against all such false teachers as the scribes and Pharisees were; and though he bids men "do what they heard those say, while they sat in the chair of Moses," yet he certainly meant no more than that they should be observant of the moral law, when read to them out of the

sacred book: Yet neither does he tell them to do all these false teachers said; for he testifies that they had put such false glosses on the law, that, if followed, would endanger the salvation of their souls.

6. *And if the blind lead the blind*—This was so self-evident a case that an apter parallel could not be found; "if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch." Alas for the blind teachers, who not only destroy their own souls, but those also of their flocks! Like priest, like people. If the minister be ignorant, he cannot teach what he does not know; and the people cannot become wise unto salvation under such a ministry; he is ignorant and wicked, and they are profligate. They who even wish such God speed are partakers of their evil deeds. But shall not the poor deceived people escape? No; both shall fall into the pit of perdition together; for they should have searched the scriptures, and not trusted to the ignorant sayings of corrupt men, no matter of what sect or party. He who has the Bible in his hand, or within his reach, and can read it, has no excuse.

"Hence it follows, that sometimes the multitude neither ought, nor can, without their utmost peril, follow the guidance of their ecclesiastical superiors."—WHITBY.

7. *Declare unto us this parable*—Is it not strange to hear the disciples asking for the explanation of such a parable as this? The true knowledge of the spirit of the gospel is a thing more uncommon than we imagine, among the generality of Christians, and even of the learned.

8. *Out of the heart*—In the heart of an unregenerate man, the principles and seeds of all sin are found. And iniquity is always conceived in the heart before it be spoken or acted. Is there any hope that a man can abstain from outward sin till his heart, that abominable fountain of corruption, be thoroughly cleansed? I trow not.

9. *Which defile the man*—Our Lord's argument is very plain: What goes into the mouth descends into the stomach and other intestines; part is retained for the nourishment of the body, and part is ejected, as being improper to afford nourishment. Nothing of this kind defiles the soul, because it does not enter into it; but the evil principles that are in it, producing evil

from him to his successors in any see. The promise was simply a prediction that he would be selected to be the first instrument in a great work of providence, which was of such a nature as to be done once for all; and being done it cannot be repeated. The great apostle fulfilled his commission in his life-time. He applied his key; he turned

back the lock; he loosed and he bound. The gates of the kingdom of heaven are thrown open; the ceremonial law is abrogated; the moral is confirmed; and the successor of St. Peter can give neither furtherance nor obstruction to the business."—BISHOP HORSLEY.

SECTION CVII.—CHRIST FORETELS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

A.D. 28. MATTHEW XVI. 21—28; MARK VIII. 31—38; IX. 1;
LUKE IX. 22—27.

AND from that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples,¹ and to teach them, how that the Son of Man must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. And he spake that saying openly. Then Peter took him,² and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord:³ This shall not be unto thee. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: Thou art an offence unto me: For thou savourest not⁴ the things that be of God, but those that be of men. And when he had called the people *unto him*, with his disciples also, he said unto them all, Whosoever will come after me,⁵ let him deny himself,⁶ and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life⁷ shall lose it: But whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul,⁸ or be cast away? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me⁹ and of my words¹⁰ in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed,¹¹ when he shall come in his own glory, and *in* his Father's, and with the holy angels. For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father¹² with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. And he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death,¹³ till they see the kingdom of God come with power, the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

1. *From that time forth began Jesus, &c.*—Before this time our Lord had only spoken of his death in a vague and obscure manner, because he would not afflict his

disciples with this matter sooner than necessity required; but now, as the time of his crucifixion drew nigh, he spoke of his sufferings and death in the most express

and clear terms. Three sorts of persons, our Lord intimates, should be the cause of his death and passion: The elders, the chief priests, and the scribes.

2. *Then Peter took him*—A man like Peter, who is of an impetuous spirit, and decides without consideration upon every subject, must of necessity be often in the wrong.

3. *Be it far from thee, Lord*—Blind and ignorant man is ever finding fault with the conduct of God. Human reason cannot comprehend the incarnation of the Almighty's Fellow, nor reconcile the belief of his Divinity with his sufferings and death. How many Peters are there now in the world, who are in effect saying, "This cannot be done unto thee; thou didst not give thy life for the sin of the world; it would be injustice to cause the innocent to suffer thus for the guilty!" But what saith God? "His soul shall be made an offering for sin;" he shall "taste death for every man;" "the iniquities of us all were laid upon him." Glorious truth! May the God who published it have eternal praises!

4. *Thou savourest not*—That is, "dost not relish," or, thou dost not understand or discern, the things of God; thou art wholly taken up with the vain thought, that my kingdom is of this world. He who opposes the doctrine of the atonement is an adversary and offence to Christ, though he be as sincere in his profession as Peter himself was. Let us beware of false friendships. Carnal relatives, when listened to, may prove the ruin of those whom, through their mistaken tenderness, they wish to save. When a man is intent on saving his own soul, his adversaries are often those of his own household.

5. *Will come after me*—That is, to be my disciple. This discourse was intended to show Peter and the rest of the disciples the nature of his kingdom; and that the honour that cometh from the world was not to be expected by those who followed Christ.

The principles of the Christian life are: (1.) To have a sincere desire to belong to Christ: "If any man be willing to be my disciple," &c. (2.) To renounce self-dependence, and selfish pursuits: "Let him deny himself." (3.) To embrace the condition which God has appointed, and

bear the troubles and difficulties he may meet with in walking the Christian road: "Let him take up his cross." (4.) To imitate Jesus, and do and suffer all in his spirit: "Let him follow me."

6. *Let him deny himself*—A follower of Christ will need to observe it in its utmost latitude of meaning, in order to be happy here, and glorious hereafter. A man's self is to him the prime cause of most of his miseries.

7. *For whosoever will save his life, &c.*—That is, shall wish to save his life, at the expence of his conscience, and casting aside the cross, "he shall lose it;" the very evil he wished to avoid shall overtake him; and he shall lose his soul into the bargain. See, then, how necessary it is to renounce one's self! But whatsoever a man loses in this world, for his steady attachment to Christ and his cause, he shall have amply made up to him in the eternal world.

8. *Lose his own soul*—Or, "lose his life." If a man should gain the whole world, its riches, honours, and pleasures, and lose his life, what would all these profit him, seeing they can only be enjoyed during life? But if the words be applied to the soul, they show the difficulty, the necessity, and importance of salvation. The world, the devil, and a man's own heart, are opposed to his salvation; therefore it is difficult. The soul was made for God, and can never be united to him, nor be happy, till saved from sin; therefore it is necessary. He who is saved from his sin, and united to God, possesses the utmost felicity that the human soul can enjoy, either in this or the coming world; therefore this salvation is important.

"For the carnal, worldly mind on earth, indeed, heaven has no attractions; and therefore is the soul neglected. The glorious prize glitters; but such as these will not run for it. But now that it is lost, will it not be seen under other and very different aspects? O yes! Suppose a lost spirit, in the separate state, to discern some glimpse of the glories of that world of joy, shining like a remote star; suppose it to catch some murmurs of the distant song which the redeemed in heaven will raise, as the voice of many waters; instantly, and keenly, and irresistibly, would

this strike a new pang into the feelings. The glory of that distant world I can now never enter; for the great gulf is fixed! In those sounds I can never join; my sad employ, alas! is weeping and wailing. Whilst away from heaven, I find no relief; and I can never enter there. In that bright world, all is love; here every one hates, and is hateful to all the rest. There, pain never enters; here, pain is never absent. There, are only the good; here, only the evil. Ah! wretch, that I should have preferred earth and sin to the glorious prize, when I might have secured it. Yes, and I have friends there: A venerable father, whose counsels I despised; a mother, whose early instructions I trampled under foot; friends, who would have led my feet into the way of peace: ministers, whose warnings and entreaties I contemned. O I might now have been with them, and with the glorified church universal, and with the glorified and glorifying Saviour himself! But the door is shut. I sold my birth-right for a mess of pottage; and even should 'I seek it carefully and with tears,' never, never can it be restored!"

—R. WATSON.

9. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me*—Our Lord hints here at one of the principal reasons of the incredulity of the Jews; they saw nothing in the person of Jesus Christ which corresponded to the pompous notions which they had formed of the Messiah. If Jesus Christ had come into the world as a mighty and opulent man, clothed with earthly glories and honours, he would have had a multitude of partizans, and most of them hypocrites.

10. *And of my words*—This was another subject of offence to the Jews: The doctrine of the cross must be believed; a suffering Messiah must be acknowledged; and poverty and affliction must be borne; and death, perhaps, suffered, in consequence of becoming his disciples. Of him, and of his words, in this sense, the world is, to this day, ashamed.

11. *Of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed*—As he refused to acknowledge me before men, so will I refuse to acknowledge him before God and his angels. Terrible consequence of the rejection of Christ! And who can help him whom the only Saviour eternally disowns?

Reader, lay this subject seriously to heart.

12. *For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father*—This seems to refer to Daniel vii. 13, 14: "Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve him." This was the glorious mediatorial kingdom which Jesus Christ was now about to set up, by the destruction of the Jewish nation and polity, and the diffusion of his gospel through the whole world. If the words be taken in this sense, the angels or messengers may signify the apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry, preaching the gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is very likely that the words do not apply to the final judgment, to which they are generally referred; but to the wonderful display of God's grace and power after the day of pentecost.

13. *There be some, which shall not taste of death*—This verse seems to confirm the above explanation, as our Lord evidently speaks of the establishment of the Christian church after the day of pentecost, and its final triumph after the destruction of the Jewish polity; as if he had said, "Some of you, my disciples, shall continue to live until these things take place." The destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish economy, which our Lord here predicts, took place about forty-three years after this: And some of the persons now with him doubtless survived that period, and witnessed the extension of the Messiah's kingdom; and our Lord told them these things before, that when they came to pass they might be confirmed in the faith, and expect an exact fulfilment of all the other promises and prophecies which concerned the extension and support of the kingdom of Christ.

From the circumstance mentioned in the conclusion of this chapter, we may easily see the nature of the kingdom and reign of Christ: It is truly spiritual and divine; having for its object the present holiness and future happiness of mankind. Worldly pomp, as well as worldly maxims, were to

be excluded from it. Christianity forbids all worldly expectations, and promises blessedness to those alone who bear the cross, leading a life of mortification and self-denial. Jesus Christ has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. How did he live? What views did he entertain? In what light did he view worldly pomp and splendour? These are questions which the most superficial reader may, without difficulty, answer to his immediate conviction. And has not Christ

said, that the "disciple is not above the Master?" If he humbled himself, how can he look upon those who, professing faith in his name, are conformed to the world and mind earthly things? These disciples affect to be above their Lord; and as they neither bear his cross, nor follow him in the regeneration, they must look for another heaven than that in which he sits at the right hand of God. This is an awful subject; but how few of those called Christians lay it to heart!

SECTION CVIII.—THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

A.D. 28. MATTHEW XVII. 1—13; MARK IX. 2—13; LUKE IX. 28—36.

AND it came to pass after six days, (*or*, about an eight days after these sayings,) Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John¹ his brother, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves to pray. And as he prayed, he was transfigured² before them: *And* the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became shining *and* glistening, exceeding white as snow, *or* as the light; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:³ Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: And when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: And if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: Not knowing what he said; for he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. While he yet thus spake, behold there came a bright cloud that overshadowed them:⁴ And they feared as they entered into the cloud. And, behold, there came a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son,⁵ in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And when the voice was past, Jesus came and touched them,⁶ and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And suddenly, when they had lifted up their eyes, *and* had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man,⁷ until the

Son of Man be risen again from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen, *yet*, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed already come, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him: Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer many things of them, and be set at nought, *as* it is written of *him*. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

1. *Peter, and James, and John*—He chose those, that they might be witnesses of his transfiguration; two or three witnesses being required by the scripture to substantiate any fact. Eminent communications of the divine favour prepare for, and entitle to, great services and great conflicts. The same three were made witnesses of his agony in the garden.

2. *Was transfigured*—That fulness of the Godhead, which dwelt bodily in Christ, now shone forth through the human nature, and manifested to his disciples, not only that Divinity which Peter had before confessed, but also the glorious resurrection body, in which they should exist in the presence of God to eternity.

3. *Moses and Elias*—Elijah came from heaven in the same body which he had upon earth; for he was translated, and did not see death. And the body of Moses was probably raised again, as a pledge of the resurrection; and as Christ is to come to judge the quick and the dead, (for we shall not all die, but all shall be changed,) he probably gave the full representation of this in the person of Moses, who died, and was thus raised to life, (or appeared now as he shall appear when raised from the dead in the last day,) and in the person of Elijah, who never tasted death. Both their bodies exhibit the same appearance, to show that the bodies of glorified saints are the same, whether the person had been translated, or whether he had died. We may conceive that the law in the person of Moses, the great Jewish legislator, and the prophets in the person of Elijah, the chief of the prophets, came now to

do homage to Jesus Christ, and to render up their authority into his hands; as he was the end of the law, and the grand subject of the predictions of the prophets. This appears more particularly from what St. Luke says, that Moses and Elijah conversed with our Lord on his death, which he was about to accomplish, (to fulfil,) because in it, all the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the law, as well as the predictions of the prophets, were fulfilled.

“There is some reason to believe that John the Baptist was the Elias who appeared. See a sermon on the transfiguration of Christ, in a volume lately published by J. Bromley.”—S. D.

4. *A bright cloud, that overshadowed them*—A cloud was frequently the symbol of the divine presence; but such a cloud had always something very remarkable in its appearance. Ezekiel, chapter i. 4, represents it as a “great cloud,” and a “fire infolding itself,” and a “brightness” about it, and out of the midst thereof, as the colour of amber out of the midst of the fire; and he tells us, that this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. But it was generally in a thick, dark cloud, that God manifested himself under the law. This might be designed as emblematical of the old covenant, which was but the shadow of the good things which were to come, and the cloud of light mentioned here, the emblem of that glorious display of God, in his gospel, by which life and immortality were brought to light.

5. *This is my beloved Son*—“This is my Son, the Beloved One, in whom I have

delighted," or, "been well pleased." God adds his testimony of approbation to what was spoken of the sufferings of Christ by Moses and Elijah; thus showing that the sacrificial economy of the old covenant was in itself of no worth, but as it referred to the grand atonement which Jesus was about to make; therefore he says, "In him have I delighted," intimating that it was in him alone, as typified by those sacrifices, that he had delighted through the whole course of the legal administration; and that it was only in reference to the death of his Son that he accepted the offerings and oblations made to him under the old covenant. "Hear him." The disciples wished to detain Moses and Elijah, that they might hear them: But God shows that the law which had been in force, and the prophets which had prophesied, until now, must all give place to Jesus; and he alone must now be attended to, as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" for no man could now come unto the Father but through him. This voice seems also to refer to that prediction in Deut. xviii. 15: "The Lord shall raise up a Prophet like unto me: Him shall ye hear." Go no more to the law, nor to the prophets, to seek for a coming Messiah; for behold he is come! Hear and obey him, and him only.

This transfiguration must have greatly confirmed the disciples in the belief of a future state, and in the doctrine of the resurrection; they saw Moses and Elijah still existing, though the former had been gathered to his fathers upwards of fourteen

hundred years, and the latter had been translated nearly nine hundred.

6. *Jesus came and touched them*—From Jesus alone are we to expect divine communications, and by his power only are we able to bear and improve them. It is very likely that this transfiguration took place in the night, which was a more proper season to show forth its glory than the day-time, in which a part of the splendour must necessarily be lost by the presence of the solar light.

7. *Tell the vision to no man*—As this transfiguration was intended to show forth the final abolition of the whole ceremonial law, it was necessary that a matter which could not fail to irritate the Jewish rulers and people should be kept secret, till Jesus had accomplished vision and prophecy by his death and resurrection.

The whole of this emblematic transaction appears to me to be intended to prove, (1.) The reality of the world of spirits, and the immortality of the soul. (2.) The resurrection of the body, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. (3.) The abolition of the Mosaic institutions, and the fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets relative to the person, nature, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (4.) The establishment of the mild, light-bringing, and life-giving gospel of the Son of God. And, (5.) That as the old Jewish covenant and mediatorship had ended, Jesus was now to be considered as the sole Teacher, the only availing Offering for sin, and the grand "Mediator between God and man."

SECTION CIX.—THE DEAF AND DUMB SPIRIT CAST OUT.

A. D. 28. MATTHEW XVII. 14—21; MARK IX. 14—29; LUKE IX. 37—43.

AND it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And when he came to *his* disciples he saw a great multitude¹ about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And, behold, one of the multitude came to him, kneeling down to him,

and cried out, saying, Master, I have brought unto thee my son. Lord, I beseech thee, have mercy on my son : For he is mine only child. He is lunatic,² and sore vexed, *and* hath a dumb spirit. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and wheresoever the spirit taketh him he suddenly crieth out ; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away ; and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I brought him to thy disciples, and besought *them* to cast him out ; and they could not. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation,³ how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? Bring thy son hither unto me. And they brought him unto him. And as he was yet a coming, when he saw him, straightway the devil threw him down, and tare him ;⁴ and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him ? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire,⁵ and into the waters, to destroy him : But if thou canst do any thing,⁶ have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,⁷ all things *are* possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee,⁸ come out of him, and enter no more into him. And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him : And he was as one dead ; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up ; and he arose. And the child was cured from that very hour ; and *he* delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. And when he was come into the house, then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out ?⁹ And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief :¹⁰ For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer¹¹ and fasting.

1. *He saw a great multitude*—It appears that a congregation had been collected during our Lord's stay on the mount. How great must have been the desire of these people to hear the words of Christ ! The assembly is self-collected, and no delay on the Preacher's side discourages them ; they continue to wait for him. In the present day, how rare is this zeal ! How few, by

the most pathetic invitation, can be brought together, even at the most convenient times, to hear the same doctrines, and to get their souls healed by the same wonder-working Christ !

2. *Mine only child. He is lunatic*—One who was most affected with his disorder at the change and full of the moon. But this lunacy was occasioned by a demon.

In this case, the devil intended to hide himself under the appearance of a natural disorder, that no supernatural means might be resorted to for his expulsion.

3. *O faithless and perverse generation!*

—These and the following words may be considered as spoken, (1.) To the disciples, because of their unbelief. (2.) To the father of the possessed, who should have brought his son to Christ. (3.) To the whole multitude, who were slow of heart to believe in him as the Messiah, notwithstanding the miracles which he wrought.

4. *The devil threw him down, and tare him, &c.*—When this demon saw Jesus, he had great rage, knowing that his time was short; and hence the extraordinary convulsions mentioned above.

5. *It hath cast him into the fire, &c.*—The paroxysms of his disorder frequently recurred; and, among his numerous falls, some were into the fire, and some into the water; so that, on this account, his life was in continual danger. Those who are under the influence of the devil, are often driven to extremes in every thing: Such are often driven into the fire of presumption, or the waters of despair. Satan takes advantage of our natural temper, state of health, and outward circumstances, to plague and ruin our souls.

6. *If thou canst do any thing*—I have already tried thy disciples, and find they can do nothing in this case; but if thou hast any power, in mercy use it in our behalf.

7. *If thou canst believe*—This was an answer to the inquiry above. I can furnish a sufficiency of power, if thou canst but bring faith to receive it. Why are not our souls completely healed? Why is not every demon cast out? Why are not pride, self-will, love of the world, lust, anger, peevishness, with all the other bad tempers and dispositions which constitute the mind of satan, entirely destroyed? Alas! it is because we do not believe: Jesus is able; more, Jesus is willing; but we are not willing to give up our idols; we give no credence to his word; therefore hath sin a being in us, and dominion over us.

8. *I charge thee*—Considerable emphasis should be laid on the pronoun: Thou didst resist the command of my disciples, now I command thee to come out. If this

had been only a natural disease, (for instance, the epilepsy, as some have argued,) could our Lord have addressed it, with any propriety, as he has done here: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, come out of him, and enter no more into him?" Is the doctrine of demoniacal influence false? If so, Jesus took the most direct method to perpetuate the belief of that falsity, by accommodating himself so completely to the deceived vulgar. But this was impossible; and therefore the doctrine of demoniacal influence is a true doctrine, otherwise Christ would never have given it the least countenance or support.

9. *Why could not we cast him out?*—

They were confounded at their want of success, but not at their want of faith, which was the cause of their miscarriage. When the ministers of the gospel find their endeavours, with respect to some places or persons, ineffectual, they should come, by private prayer, to Christ, humble themselves before him, and beg to be informed whether some evil in themselves have not been the cause of the unfruitfulness of their labours.

10. *Because of your unbelief*—Are we preachers of the gospel? Do the things of God rest upon our minds with a deep and steady conviction? Can we expect that a doctrine which we do not, from conviction, credit ourselves, can be instrumental in our hands of begetting faith in others? "So we preached, and so ye believed." The word preached generally begets in the people the same spirit which the preacher possesses.

"The majority of those who were endued with miraculous powers were, no doubt, pious persons; but they were bestowed upon some who, though not wholly without incipient signs of grace, never gave themselves up fully to the sanctifying influence of Christ's religion; and they remained with others after much spiritual declension; as not being necessarily connected with the state of the heart, or of that faith the actings of which, being directed to Christ as the Saviour, draws life and salvation from him."—R. WATSON.

11. *This kind goeth not out but by prayer, &c.*—While candour obliges me to acknowledge that I cannot account for the fact here alleged,—that a certain class or genus of demons cannot be expelled but by prayer

and fasting, while others may be ejected without them,—I can give a sense to the passage which all my readers will easily understand ; namely, that there are certain evil propensities in some persons, which, pampering the flesh, tend to nourish and strengthen ; and that self-denial and fasting, accompanied by prayer to God, are the most likely means, not only to mortify such propensities, but also to destroy them.

The truth of God's miraculous interpositions, the miracles of the New Testament, demoniacal possessions and influence, the atonement, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration of the corrupted human heart, &c., &c., must not be given up to please a certain description of persons who have no commerce with God themselves, and cannot bear that others should either have or pretend to it.

SECTION CX.—CHRIST AGAIN FORETELLS HIS DEATH ; PAYS TRIBUTE.

A.D. 28. MATTHEW XVII. 22—27 ; MARK IX. 30—33 ;
LUKE IX. 43—45 ; JOHN VII. 1.

AND after these things Jesus walked in Galilee : For he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him : And he would not that any man should know *it*. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, Jesus taught his disciples and said unto them, while they abode in Galilee, Let these sayings sink down into your ears : For the Son of Man shall be betrayed¹ and delivered into the hands of men : And they shall kill him ; and after that he is killed, he shall rise again the third day. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not : And they were exceeding sorry ; and were afraid to ask him of that saying. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute ? He saith, Yes.² And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute ? of their own children, or of strangers ? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.³ Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them,⁴ go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money : That take, and give unto them for me and thee.

1. *The Son of Man shall be betrayed* —“ Christ perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, and yet undertook the work of our redemption. He tells his disciples, (1.) That he should ‘ be betrayed into the hands of men.’ This refers to Judas’s betraying him into the hands of the priests, and their betraying him into the

hands of the Romans. (2.) That they shall kill him : Nothing less than that would satisfy their rage ; it was his blood, his precious blood, they thirsted after : ‘ This is the heir ; come, let us kill him.’ And nothing less would satisfy God’s justice, and answer his undertaking ; if he be a sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed ;

without blood, no remission. (3.) Still, when he spoke of his death, he gave a hint of his resurrection, the joy set before him." —HENRY.

2. *He saith, Yes*—From this reply of Peter, it is evident that our Lord customarily paid all taxes, tributes, &c., which were common among the people wherever he came. The children of God are subject to all civil laws in the places where they live, and should pay the taxes levied on them by public authority; and though any of these should be found unjust, they rebel not, as their business is not to reform the politics of nations, but the morals of the world.

3. *Then are the children free*—As this money is levied for the support of that temple of which I am the Lord, then I am not obliged to pay the tax; and my disciples, like the priests that minister, should be exempted from the necessity of paying.

4. *Lest we offend them*—Be a stumbling-block to the priests, or rulers of the Jews, I will pay the tribute. "Go thou to the sea; cast a hook, and take the first fish; thou shalt find a piece of money." This piece of money was equal in value to four drachms, or two shekels, (five shillings of our money,) and consequently was sufficient to pay the tribute for our Lord and Peter, which amounted to about half-a-crown each. If the *stater* was in the mouth or belly of the fish before, who can help admiring the wisdom of Christ, that discovered it there? If it was not before in the mouth of the fish, who can help admiring the power of Christ, that impelled the fish to go where the *stater* had been lost in the bottom of the sea, take it up, come towards the shore where Peter was fishing, and, with the *stater* in its mouth or stomach, catch hold of the hook that was to

draw it out of the water? But suppose there was no *stater* there, which is as likely as otherwise, then Jesus created it for the purpose, and here his omnipotence was shown; for to make a thing exist that did not exist before, is an act of unlimited power, however small the thing itself may be. Our Lord seems to have wrought this miracle for the following purposes: (1.) More forcibly to impress the minds of his disciples, and his followers in general, with the necessity and propriety of being subject to all the laws of the different states, kingdoms, &c., wheresoever the providence of God might cast their lot. (2.) To show forth his own unlimited power and knowledge, that they might be fully convinced that he knew all things, even to the most minute; and could do whatsoever he pleased; and that both his wisdom and power were continually interested in behalf of his true disciples. (3.) To teach all believers a firm trust and reliance on Divine Providence, the sources of which can never be exhausted; and which, directed by infinite wisdom and love, will make every provision essentially requisite for the comfort and support of life. How many of the poor followers of Christ have been enabled to discern his kind hand, even in the means furnished them to discharge the taxes laid on them by the state. The profane and the unprincipled may deride, and mock on; but the people of God know it to be their duty and their interest to be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; and, while his grace and providence render this obedience, in things both spiritual and secular, possible, his love, which their hearts feel, renders their duty their delight. The accomplishment of such ends as these is worthy both of the wisdom and benevolence of Christ.

SECTION CXI.—THE DISCIPLES CONTENTEND FOR SUPERIORITY.

A.D. 21. MATTHEW XVIII. 1—9; MARK IX. 33—37, 42—50;
LUKE IX. 46—48.

AND being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace:

For by the way there arose a reasoning among them, *and* they had disputed among themselves, which of them should be greatest.¹ And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and took and set him by him in the midst of them: And when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted,² and become as little children,³ ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself⁴ as this little child, the same is greatest⁵ in the kingdom of heaven. And whosoever shall receive this child,⁶ *or* one of such little children, in my name, receiveth me: And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me: For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones⁷ which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were cast into the sea, *and* drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not,⁸ and the fire is not quenched.⁹ And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God, *or* into life, with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire,¹⁰ and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt *is* good: But if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves,¹¹ and have peace one with another.

1. *Which of them should be greatest*—Could these disciples have viewed the kingdom of Christ in any other light than that of a temporal one? Hence they wished to know whom he would make his prime minister, whom his general, whom his chief chancellor, whom supreme judge, &c. &c. Is it he who first became thy dis-

ciple, or he who is thy nearest relative, or he who has most frequently entertained thee, or he who is the oldest, merely as to years? Could this inquiry have proceeded from any but the nine disciples who had not witnessed our Lord's transfiguration? Peter, James, and John, were surely more spiritual in their views! And yet how soon

did even these forget that his kingdom was not of this world!

"The ambitious dispute of the disciples concerning their precedence in the kingdom of heaven, proves that not even the repeated predictions of our Saviour's sufferings and death could banish from the minds of his followers their pre-conceived ideas of the Messiah's kingdom. To correct this prevailing error, our Saviour now resorts to a different mode of undeceiving them. He places a little child before them, assuring them that unless they be converted; that is, unless they become as unambitious and as humble; as mild, as meek, and as regardless of all temporal power and distinctions, as a little child; they could not even be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Humility is the characteristic virtue of Christianity; and the highest rewards of heaven are promised to the humblest; for 'he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.'"—TOWNSEND.

2. *Except ye be converted*—Unless ye be saved from those prejudices which are at present so baneful to your nation, (seeking a temporal and not a spiritual kingdom,) unless ye be clothed with the spirit of humility, ye cannot enter into the spirit, design, and privileges of my spiritual and eternal kingdom. The name of this kingdom should put you in mind of its nature: (1.) The King is heavenly; (2.) His subjects are heavenly-minded; (3.) Their country is heavenly; for they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth; (4.) The government of this kingdom is wholly spiritual and divine.

3. *And become as little children*—That is, be as truly without worldly ambition, and the lust of power, as little children are, who act among themselves as if all were equal.

"Nothing could serve to impress them more strongly with the exclusive spirituality of that kingdom which he was about to establish, than making a child-like character the essential qualification for entering it. Civil offices would require skill; the government of men, energy and decision of character; the overthrow of the Roman legions, in order to deliver their country from a foreign yoke, courage; but Christ requires that they should become little

children! From this alone they might most certainly conclude, that, notwithstanding some better and more hallowed views, they had been under the influence of the most erroneous conceptions of the nature of the kingdom of Messiah."—R. WATSON.

4. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself*—So great is the disparity between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, that there is no way of rising to honours in the former, but by humility of mind, and continual self-abasement.

5. *The same is greatest*—Thus our Lord shows them that they were all equal, and that there could be no superiority among them, but what must come from the deepest humility; he intimates, also, that wherever this principle should be found, it would save its possessor from seeking worldly honours or earthly profits, and from seeking to be a ruler over his brethren, or a lord in God's heritage.

6. *Receive this child*—As our Lord in the preceding verses considers a little child an emblem of a genuine disciple, so by the term in this verse he means a disciple only. "Whosoever will receive, that is, show unto such a child-like, unambitious disciple of mine, any act of kindness for my sake, I will consider it as done to myself."

7. *But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones*—But, on the contrary, whosoever shall cause one of the least of those who believe in me to be stumbled, to go into the spirit of the world, or give way to sin, such an one shall meet with the most exemplary punishment.

Let those who act the part of the devil, in tempting others to sin, hear this declaration of our Lord, and tremble.

8. *Where their worm dieth not*—The bitter reflection, "I might have avoided sin, but I did not; I might have been saved, but I would not," must be equal to ten thousand tormentors. What intolerable anguish must this produce in a damned soul!

"Their worm." It seems every one has his worm, his peculiar remorse for the evils he did, and for the grace he rejected; while the fire, the state of excruciating torment, is common to all. Reader, may

the living God saves thee from this worm, and from this fire! Amen.

9. *The fire is not quenched*—The state of punishment is continual; there is no respite, alleviation, nor end!

10. *Every one shall be salted with fire*—If this passage be taken according to the common meaning, it is awful indeed! Here may be seen the greatness, multiplicity, and eternity, of the pains of the damned. They suffer without being able to die; they are burned without being consumed; they are sacrificed without being sanctified; are salted with the fire of hell, as eternal victims of the divine justice. We must of

necessity be sacrificed to God, after one way or other, in eternity; and we have now the choice, either of the unquenchable fire of his justice, or of the everlasting flame of his love.

11. *Have salt in yourselves*—See that ye have at all times the preserving principle of divine grace in your hearts, and give that proof of it which will satisfy your own minds, and convince or silence the world: Live in brotherly kindness and peace with each other: Thus shall all men see that you are free from ambition, and that you are my disciples indeed.

SECTION CXII.—CHRIST CHARGES HIS DISCIPLES TO AVOID GIVING OFFENCE.

A.D. 28.

MATTHEW XVIII. 10—20.

TAKE heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; ¹ for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold ² the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father ³ which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. Moreover if thy brother ⁴ shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree ⁵ on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them ⁶ of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst ⁷ of them.

1. *One of these little ones*—One of my simple, loving, humble disciples.

2. *Their angels do always behold*—Our Lord here not only alludes to, but, in my opinion, establishes, the notion received by almost all nations, namely, That every person has a guardian angel; and that these have always access to God, to receive orders relative to the management of their charge.

“The argument against despising Christ’s disciples is placed upon this ground, that they are so the objects of God’s regard, that he will raise them into his immediate presence, and crown them with immortal life; and this argument our Lord expresses in this most striking manner: ‘Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven,’ that is, in a future state, ‘their angels,’ their spirits, ‘do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;’ they are admitted even to the beatific vision of God.”
—R. WATSON.

3. *It is not the will of your Father*—If any soul be finally lost, it is not because God’s will or counsel was against its salvation, or that a proper provision had not been made for it; but that, though light came into the world, it preferred darkness to light, because of its attachment to its evil deeds.

4. *If thy brother*—“Any one who is a member of the same religious society, ‘sin against thee,’ (1.) ‘Go and reprove him alone,’ it may be in person; if that cannot be so well done, by thy messenger, or in writing; which in many cases is likely to be the most effectual. Observe, our Lord gives no liberty to omit this, or to exchange it for either of the following steps. If this do not succeed,

“(2.) *Take with thee one or two more*—Men whom he esteems, who may then confirm and enforce what thou sayest; and afterwards, if need require, bear witness of what was spoken. If even this do not succeed, then, and not before,

“(3.) *Tell it unto the church*—Lay the whole matter before the congregation of Christian believers, in that place of which

he is a member, or before the minister and elders, as the representatives of the church or assembly. If all this avail not, then,

“(4.) *Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican*—To whom thou art, as a Christian, to owe earnest and persevering good will, and acts of kindness; but have no religious communion with him, till, if he have been convicted, he acknowledge his fault. Whosoever follows this threefold rule will seldom offend others, and never be offended himself.”—J. WESLEY.

5. *If two of you shall agree*—“Symphonize,” or “harmonize.” It is a metaphor taken from a number of musical instruments set to the same key, and playing the same tune: Here, it means a perfect agreement of the hearts, desires, wishes, and voices, of two or more persons praying to God. It also intimates that as a number of musical instruments, skilfully played, in a good concert, are pleasing to the ears of men, so a number of persons united together in warm, earnest, cordial prayer, is highly pleasing in the sight and ears of the Lord. Now, this conjoint prayer refers, in all probability, to the binding and loosing in the preceding verse; and thus we see what power faithful prayer has with God!

6. *It shall be done for them*—What an encouragement to pray! even to two, if there be no more disposed to join in this heavenly work.

7. *There am I in the midst*—None but God could say these words, to say them with truth, because God alone is every where present; and these words refer to his omnipresence. “Wherever;” suppose millions of assemblies were collected in the same moment, in different places of the creation, which is a very possible case, this promise states that Jesus is in each of them. Can, any, therefore, say these words, except that God who fills both heaven and earth? But Jesus says these words; *ergo*—Jesus is God. Let it be observed, that Jesus is not among them to spy out their sins, or to mark down the imperfections of their worship; but to enlighten, strengthen, comfort, and save them.

SECTION CXIII.—CHRIST ENJOINS MUTUAL FORGIVENESS.

A. D. 28.

MATTHEW XVIII. 21—35.

THEN came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ¹ Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: But, Until seventy times seven. ² Therefore is the kingdom ³ of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, ⁴ his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, ⁵ saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: And he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: ⁶ But went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, ⁷ they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, ⁸ till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, ⁹ if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

1. *Till seven times?*—Revenge is natural to man; that is, man is naturally a vindictive being; and, in consequence, nothing is more difficult to him than forgiveness of injuries.

2. *Seventy times seven*—The just God punishes sin in an exemplary manner. Sinful man, who is exposed to the stroke of divine justice, should be abundant in forgiveness, especially as the merciful only shall find mercy. The sum "seventy times seven" makes four hundred and ninety. Now, an offence, properly such, is that

which is given wantonly, maliciously, and without any provocation. It is my opinion that, let a man search ever so accurately, he will not find that he has received, during the whole course of his life, four hundred and ninety such offences. If the man who receives the offence has given any cause for it, in that case the half of the offence, at least, towards his brother ceases.

3. *Therefore is the kingdom*—In respect to sin, cruelty, and oppression, God will proceed in the kingdom of heaven (the dispensation of the gospel) as he did in for-

mer times; and every person shall give an account of himself to God. Every sin is a debt contracted with the justice of God. Men are all God's own servants; and the day is at hand in which their Master will settle accounts with them, inquire into their work, and pay them their wages. Great Judge! what an awful time must this be, when, with multitudes, nothing shall be found but sin and insolvency!

4. *He had not to pay*—That is, “not being able to pay.” As there could not be the smallest probability that a servant, wholly dependent on his master, who was now absolutely insolvent, could ever pay a debt he had contracted, of more than sixty-seven millions; so is it impossible for a sinner, infinitely indebted to divine justice, ever to pay a mite out of the talent.

5. *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him*—The means which a sinner should use to be saved are, (1.) Deep humiliation of heart: “He fell down.” (2.) Ferrent prayer. (3.) Confidence in the mercy of God: “Have patience.” (4.) A firm purpose to devote his soul and body to his Maker: “I will pay thee all.” A sinner may be said, according to the economy of grace, to pay all, when he brings the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus to the throne of justice, by faith; thus offering an equivalent for the pardon he seeks, and paying all he owes to divine justice, by presenting the blood of the Lamb.

6. *And he would not, &c.*—To the unmerciful, God will show no mercy; this is an eternal purpose of the Lord, which never can be changed. God teaches us what to do to a fellow-sinner, by what he does to us. Our fellow-servant's debts to us, and ours to God, are as one hundred *denarii* to ten thousand talents. When we humble ourselves before him, God freely forgives us all this mighty sum. And shall we exact from our brother recompence for the most trifling faults?

7. *His fellow-servants saw what was done*—An act of this kind is so dishonourable to all the followers of Christ, and to the spirit of his gospel, that, through the respect they owe to their Lord and Master, and through the concern they feel for the prosperity of his cause, they are obliged to plead against it at the throne of God.

8. *Delivered him to the tormentors*—Not

only continued captivity is here intended, but the tortures to be endured in it. If a person was suspected of fraud, as there was reason for in such a case as that mentioned here, he was put to very cruel tortures among the Asiatics, to induce him to confess. In the punishments of China, a great variety of these appear; and probably there is an allusion to such torments in this place. Before, he and all that he had were only to be sold; now, as he has increased his debt, so he has increased his punishment: He is delivered to the tormentors, to the horrors of a guilty conscience, and to a fearful looking for a fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. But if this refers to the day of judgment, then “the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched,” are the tormentors.

9. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you*—The goodness and indulgence of God towards us is the pattern we should follow in our dealings with others. If we take man for our exemplar, we shall err, because our copy is a bad one; and our lives are not likely to be better than the copy we imitate. Follow Christ; be merciful as your Father who is in heaven is merciful. You cannot complain of the fairness of your copy. Reader, hast thou a child or servant who has offended thee, and humbly asks forgiveness? Hast thou a debtor or a tenant who is insolvent, and asks for a little longer time? And hast thou not forgiven that child or servant? Hast thou not given time to that debtor or tenant? How, then, canst thou ever expect to see the face of the just and merciful God? Thy child is banished, or kept at a distance; thy debtor is thrown into prison; or thy tenant sold up: Yet the child offered to fall at thy feet; and the debtor or tenant, utterly insolvent, prayed for a little longer time, hoping God would enable him to pay thee all; but to these things thy stony heart and seared conscience paid no regard! O monster of ingratitude! scandal to human nature, and reproach to God! If thou canst, go hide thyself, even in hell, from the face of the Lord!

In our common method of dealing with insolvent debtors, we, in some sort, imitate the Asiatic customs: We put them in pri-

son, and all their circumstances there are so many tormentors; the place, the air, the company, the provision, the accommodations, all, all destructive to comfort, to peace, to health, and to every thing that humanity can devise. If the person be poor, or comparatively poor, is his imprisonment likely to lead him to discharge his debt? His creditor may rest assured that he is now farther from his object than ever. The man had no other way of discharging the debt but by his labour; that is now

impossible, through his confinement; and the creditor is put to a certain expense towards his maintenance. How foolish is this policy! And how much do such laws stand in need of revision and amendment. Imprisonment for debt, in such a case as that supposed above, can answer no other end than the gratification of the malice, revenge, or inhumanity of the creditor. Better sell all that he has, and, with his hands and feet untied, let him begin the world afresh.

SECTION CXIV.—ONE, NOT A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, CASTS OUT DEMONS.

A. D. 28.

MARK IX. 38—41; LUKE IX. 49, 50.

AND John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name,¹ and he followeth not us: And we forbid him,² because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: ³ For there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward.

1. *We saw one casting out devils in thy name*—It can scarcely be supposed that a man who knew nothing of Christ, or who was only a common exorcist, could be able to work a miracle in Christ's name; we may therefore safely imagine, that this was either one of John the Baptist's disciples, who, at his master's command, had believed in Jesus, or one of the seventy, whom Christ had sent out, who, after he had fulfilled his commission, had retired from accompanying the other disciples; but as he still held fast his faith in Christ, and walked in good conscience, the influence of his Master still continued with him, so that he could cast out demons as well as the other disciples.

2. *We forbid him*—I do not see that we have any right to attribute any other motive to John than that which he himself owns: "Because he followed not us;" because he did not attach himself constantly to thee, as we do, we thought he could not be in a proper spirit.

"(1.) This person might believe in Jesus, without being one of his retinue, and follow his doctrine, though he did not his person. (2.) He might do miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, without being one of his true disciples, even as Judas is supposed to have done, and those others to whom our Lord will profess, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' (3.) Or he might be a disciple of John the Baptist, and so do his miracles in the name of Christ, shortly to come. But by what means soever it was that he did them, it is no small confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that our Saviour's name was thus powerful, even among those that did not follow him, and therefore were incapable of doing any thing by way of compact with him."—STACKHOUSE.

3. *Forbid him not*—If you meet him again, let him go on quietly in the work in which God owns him. If he were not of God, the demons would not be subject to him, and his work could not prosper. A

spirit of bigotry has little countenance from these passages. There are some who are so outrageously wedded to their own creed and religious system, that they would rather let sinners perish than suffer those who differ from them to become the instruments of their salvation. Even the good that is done they either deny or suspect, because the person does not follow them. This also is vanity and an evil disease. (1.) Considering the life of mortification and self-denial which Christ and his disciples led, it is surprising to find that any one should voluntarily offer to be his disciple. But there is such an attractive influence in truth, and such a persuasive eloquence in the consistent steady conduct of a righteous man, that the first must have admirers, and the latter imitators. Christianity, as it is

generally exhibited, has little attractive in it; and it is no wonder that the cross of Christ is not prized, as the blessings of it are not known; and they can be known and exhibited by him only who follows Christ fully. (2.) It is natural for man to wish to do the work of God in his own spirit; hence he is ready to call down fire and brimstone from heaven against those who do not conform to his own views of things. A spirit of persecution is abominable. Had man the government of the world, in a short time, not only sects and parties, but even true religion itself, would be banished from the face of the earth. Meekness, long-suffering, and benevolence become the followers of Christ; and his followers should ever consider that his work can never be done but in his own spirit.

SECTION CXV.—THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY.

A. D. 28.

LUKE X. 1—16.

AFTER these things the Lord appointed other seventy¹ also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.² Go your ways: Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: And salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there,³ your peace shall rest upon it: If not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: For the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: Notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they

had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

1. *The Lord appointed other seventy*—These Christ sent by two and two: (1.) To teach them the necessity of concord among the ministers of righteousness. (2.) That in the mouths of two witnesses every thing might be established. And, (3.) That they might comfort and support each other in their difficult labour.

2. *Send forth labourers into his harvest*—“The ministers of God are labourers in his harvest. To God alone doth it belong to send forth labourers into his harvest, and none must thrust themselves in till God sends them forth. The number of faithful labourers is comparatively small. It is the church's duty to pray, and that earnestly and incessantly, to the Lord of the harvest, to increase the number of faithful labourers.”—BURKITT.

3. *And if the son of peace be there*—“Son of peace” in the text not only means a peaceable, quiet man, but one also of good report for his uprightness and benevolence. It would have been a dishonour to this mission, had the missionaries taken up their lodgings with those who had not a good report among them who were without.

“I tell you, sinners, that the principles of truth you have now heard, teach, what I would to God might be impressed indelibly on your hearts, your exposure to a doom of exclusion and punishment far more awful than any language can describe, or than any imagination can conceive. Who will receive from Christ an hundred fold? Not you. Who will sit

upon thrones, and be invested with the priesthood and royalty of heaven? Not you. Who will inherit everlasting life? Not you. Then where will you be, and what will you have? When the great day of decision shall come, you will rise; but to be placed at the left hand of the Judge: You will be scrutinized; but to receive the sentence of eternal condemnation: You will be dismissed; but to live as the victims of the remediless curse; and while those you have scoffed at, or neglected, shall be lifted up to the exaltation of the skies, you will be hurled down to the abyss where dwells the blackness of darkness for ever! O it matters not that on this earth you are rich, or that you are powerful, or that you are honourable: Because you are not the followers of the Lord, in your wealth, there is poverty; in your power, there is impotence; in your honour, there is infamy; the angel of destruction breathes on every fair possession, and transforms all things into the blasted emblems of an imperishable ruin. Are you not awakened by the threatenings which are uttered by the lips of the Eternal? Are you not induced to seek the path of escape, and to inquire what you must do to be saved. The harvest is not yet past; the summer is not yet ended. Believe on Christ, follow Christ, commit your souls to Christ; and then the radiance of celestial glory will enshrine you all. Forsake the impurities of time, and you shall gain the delights of eternity; lose the body, and you will save the soul.”—J. PARSONS.

SECTION CXVI.—CHRIST GOES TO THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

A.D. 29.

JOHN VII. 1—13.

AFTER these things Jesus walked in Galilee: For he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews'

feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For *there is* no man *that* doeth any thing in secret,¹ and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.² Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come :³ But your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you ;⁴ but me it hateth,⁵ because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him⁶ at the feast, and said, Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : For some said, He is a good man :⁷ Others said, Nay ; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

1. *No man that doeth any thing in secret, &c.*—They took it for granted that Christ was influenced by the same spirit which themselves felt ; and that therefore he should use every opportunity of exhibiting himself to the public, that he might get into repute ; and they hoped that a part of his honour would be reflected back upon themselves, as being his near relations. They seem to have said : “ It is too little to employ thyself in working miracles in Galilee, in the country, and in small villages, among an ignorant and credulous people, from whom thou canst not get much credit : Go to Jerusalem, the capital, and among the learned doctors, in the presence of the whole nation assembled at this feast, work thy miracles, and get thyself a name.”

2. *Neither did his brethren believe in him*—They did not receive him as the promised Messiah ; but, having seen so many of his miracles, they could not but consider him as an eminent prophet. They supposed that, if he were the Messiah, he would wish to manifest himself as such to the world ; and, because he did not do so, they did not believe that he was the salvation of Israel.

3. *My time is not yet come*—It is probable our Lord meant no more than this, that he had some business to transact be-

fore he could go to Jerusalem ; but his brethren, having nothing to hinder them, might set off immediately. Others think he speaks of his passion : “ My time of suffering is not yet come ; as ye are still in friendship with the world, ye need not be under any apprehension of danger : Ye may go when ye please.” The first sense I think is the best.

4. *The world cannot hate you*—The Jews will not persecute you, because ye are in their sentiments and interests. Ye also expect a worldly Messiah.

5. *But me it hateth*—Because I condemn its injustice, its pride, its ambition, and its maxims, by my life and doctrine.

6. *Then the Jews sought him*—By “ Jews” here are to be understood the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers of the people, and not the inhabitants of the province of Judea. It appears, from the following verses, that many of the people were prejudiced in his favour, but they dared not to own it publicly for fear of the Jews, that is, for fear of the rulers of the people.

7. *Some said, He is a good man*—The multitude were divided in their opinions concerning him : Those who knew him best said, “ He is a good man :” Those who spoke according to the character given him by the priests, &c., said, “ Nay ; but he deceiveth the people.” Those who spoke

evil of him spoke out, because they had the rulers on their side; but those who spoke good of him were obliged to do it in private, because they feared these rulers. Calumny and slander are among the privileged orders; they stalk abroad with their thousand brazen mouths, and blast the

reputation of the followers of God. Benevolence and candour are only on sufferance; and a whisper in secret is the most they are permitted to give in behalf of Christ and his followers, whose laws and maxims condemn a vicious world, and goad it to revenge.

SECTION CXVII.—CHRIST CONFOUNDS THE JEWS IN THE TEMPLE.

A.D. 29.

JOHN VII. 14—24.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? ¹ Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, ² but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, ³ he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself ⁴ seeketh his own glory: But he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, ⁵ and *yet* none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: ⁶ Who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. ⁷ If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole ⁸ on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, ⁹ but judge righteous judgment.

1. *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*—The Jewish learning consisted in the knowledge of their own scriptures, and the traditions of their elders. In this learning our blessed Lord excelled. No person ever spoke with more grace and dignity, or knew better how to make a more proper use, or a happier application, of Jewish allegories and parables; because none ever penetrated the sense of the scriptures as he did; none ever cited them more successfully, or ever showed their accomplishment in so complete and satisfactory a manner. As these branches of learning were taught at the Jewish schools, and our Lord had never attended there, they were astonished to find him excelling in that sort

of learning, of which they themselves professed to be the sole teachers.

2. *My doctrine is not mine*—Our blessed Lord, in the character of Messiah, might as well say, "My doctrine is not mine," as an ambassador might say, "I speak not my own words, but his who sent me:" And he speaks these words to draw the attention of the Jews from the teaching of man to the teaching of God; and to show them that he was the promised Messiah, the very person on whom, according to the prophet Isaiah, xi. 2, the Spirit of Jehovah—the Spirit of wisdom, counsel, understanding, might, and knowledge—should rest.

3. *If any man will do his will, &c.*—I will give you a sure rule by which ye may

judge of my doctrine : If you really wish to do the will of God, begin the practice of it ; and take my doctrine, and apply it to all that you know God requires of man ; and if you find one of my precepts contrary to the nature, perfections, and glory of God, or to the present or eternal welfare of men, then ye shall be at liberty to assert that my doctrine is human and erroneous, and God has not sent me. But if, on the contrary, ye find that the sum and substance of my preaching is, that men shall love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves ; and that this doctrine must bring glory to God in the highest, while it produces peace and good-will among men ; then acknowledge that God has visited you, and receive me as the Messiah promised to your fathers.

4. *He that speaketh of himself, &c.*—I will give you another rule, whereby you shall know whether I am from God or not : If I speak so as to procure my own glory, to gratify vanity, or to secure and promote my secular interests, then reject me as a deceiver and as a false prophet. But if I act only to promote the glory of God, to induce all men to love and obey him ; if I propose nothing but what leads to the perfection of his law, and the accomplishment of its ordinances, you cannot help acknowledging me at least for a true prophet ; and, if you add to this the proofs which I have given of my mission and power, you must acknowledge me as the mighty Power of God, and the promised Messiah.

5. *Did not Moses give you the law, &c.*—The scribes and Pharisees announced our Lord to the multitude as a deceiver ; and they grounded their calumny on this, that he was not an exact observer of the law ; for he had healed a man on the sabbath-day, and consequently must be a false prophet. Now they insinuated, that the interests of religion required him to be put to death : (1.) As a violator of the law ; and, (2.) As a false prophet and deceiver of the people. To destroy this evil reasoning, our Lord speaks in this wise : “ If I deserve death for curing a man on the sabbath, and desiring him to carry home his bed, which you consider a violation of the law, you are more culpable than I am ; for you circumcise a child on the sabbath, which requires much more bustle, and is of so much

less use than what I have done to the infirm man. But, if you think you do not violate the law by circumcising a child on the sabbath, how can you condemn me for having cured one of yourselves, who has been afflicted thirty and eight years ? If you consider my conduct with the same eye with which you view your own, far from finding any thing criminal in it, you will see much reason to give glory to God. Why, therefore, go ye about to kill me, as a transgressor of the law, when not one of yourselves keeps it ? ”

6. *Thou hast a devil*—The crowd, who made this answer, were not in the secret of the chief priests. They could not suppose that any person desired to put him to death for healing a diseased man ; and therefore, in their brutish manner, they say, “ Thou hast a demon ; ” thou art beside thyself, and slanderest the people ; for none of them desires to put thee to death.

7. *Ye circumcise a man*—From this, and several other circumstances, it is evident that the keeping of the sabbath, even in the strictest sense of the word, ever admitted of the works of necessity and mercy to be done on it ; and that those who did not perform such works on that day, when they had opportunity, were properly violators of every law founded on the principles of mercy and justice. If the Jews had said, “ Why didst thou not defer the healing of the sick man till the ensuing day ? ” he might have well answered, “ Why do ye not defer the circumcising of your children to the ensuing day, when the eighth day happens to be a sabbath ? which is a matter of infinitely less consequence than the restoration of this long-afflicted man.”

8. *Every whit whole*—The law of circumcision required the removal of a small portion of flesh, which was considered a blot and reproach among the Hebrews, because it confounded them with the nations who were not in covenant with God. Christ, to this, opposes the complete cure of the infirm man, who was diseased throughout his whole body : If the one was permitted on the sabbath day, for the reason already alleged, surely the other had stronger reasons to recommend it.

9. *Judge not according to the appearance*—Attend to the law, not merely in the letter, but in its spirit and design. Learn,

that the law which commands men to rest on the sabbath day is subordinate to the law of mercy and love, which requires them to be ever active to promote God's glory in the comfort and salvation of their fellow-creatures; and endeavour to judge of the merit or demerit of an action, not from the

first impression it may make upon your prejudices, but from its tendency, and the motives of the person, as far as it is possible for you to acquaint yourselves with them; still believing the best, where you have no certain proof to the contrary.

SECTION CXVIII.—THE JEWS WISH TO SLAY CHRIST.

A.D. 29.

JOHN VII. 25—36.

THEN said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: But when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.¹ Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am:² And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: For I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: But no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles³ than these which this *man* hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things⁴ concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you,⁵ and *then* I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me:⁶ And where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What *manner of saying* is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: And where I am, *thither* ye cannot come?

1. *No man knoweth whence he is*—The generality of the people knew very well, that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, in the city, and of the family, of David: But, from Isaiah liii. 8, "Who shall declare his generation?" they probably thought that there should be something so peculiarly mysterious in his birth, or in the manner of his appearing, that no person could fully understand. Had they considered his miraculous conception, they would have felt their minds relieved on this point. The Jews thought that the Messiah,

after his birth, would hide himself for some considerable time; and that, when he began to preach, no man should know where he had been hidden, and whence he had come.

2. *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am*—Perhaps they should be read interrogatively: "Do ye both know me, and know whence I am?" Our Lord takes them up on their own profession, and argues from it. Since you have got so much information concerning me, add this to it, to make it complete; namely, that "I am not come of myself;" am no self-

created or self-authorized prophet; I came from God: The testimony of John the Baptist, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the voice from heaven, the purity and excellence of my doctrine, and the multitude of my miracles, sufficiently attest this. Now, God is true, who has borne testimony to me; but ye know him not, therefore it is that this testimony is disregarded.

3. *Will he do more miracles*—It was the belief of the Jews, that, when the Messiah came, he would do all kinds of miracles; and, in order that they might have the fullest proof of the divine mission of Christ, it had pleased God to cause miracles to cease for between four and five hundred years, and that John the Baptist himself had not wrought any. His miracles, therefore, were a full proof of his divine mission.

4. *The people murmured such things*—The people began to be convinced that he was the Messiah; and this being generally

whispered about, the Pharisees, &c., thought it high time to put him to death, lest the people should believe on him; therefore they sent officers to take him.

5. *Yet a little while am I with you*—As he knew that the Pharisees had designed to take and put him to death, and that in about six months from this time, as some conjecture, he should be crucified, he took the present opportunity of giving this information to the common people, who were best disposed towards him, that they might lay their hearts to his teaching, and profit by it, while they had the privilege of enjoying it.

6. *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me*—When the Roman armies come against you, you will vainly seek for a deliverer. But ye shall be cut off in your sins, because ye did not believe in me; and “where I am,” in the kingdom of glory, “ye cannot come;” for nothing that is unholly shall enter into the new Jerusalem.

SECTION CXIX.—DIFFERENT OPINIONS CONCERNING CHRIST.

A.D. 29.

JOHN VII. 37—53.

IN the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said,¹ out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.² (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: For the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; ³ because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.⁴ Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? ⁵ Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.⁶ Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? ⁷ But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being

one of them,) Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? ⁸ Search, and look: ⁹ For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.

1. *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said*—He who receives me as the Messiah, according to what the scripture has said concerning me; my person, birth, conduct, preaching, and miracles, being compared with what is written there, as ascertaining the true Messiah: "Out of his belly," from his heart and soul; for in his soul shall this Spirit dwell.

2. *Living water*—As a true spring is ever supplied with water from the great deep, with which it has communication, so shall the soul of the genuine believer be supplied with light, life, love, and liberty, and all the other graces of the indwelling Spirit, from the indwelling Christ. The Jews frequently compare the gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit to water in general; to rain, fountains, wells, rivers, &c., &c.

3. *Was not yet given*—Certain measures of the Holy Spirit had been vouchsafed from the beginning of the world to believers and unbelievers: But that abundant effusion of his graces spoken of by Joel, which peculiarly characterized the gospel times, was not granted till after the ascension of Christ: (1.) Because this Spirit in its plenitude was to come in consequence of his atonement; and therefore could not come till after his crucifixion. (2.) It was to supply the place of Christ to his disciples, and to all true believers; and therefore it was not necessary till after the removal of his bodily presence from among them.

"Christianity is pre-eminently a dispensation of the Holy Spirit. More light, more power, more privilege, more grace, is extended, wherever this light of heaven shines; and, by consequence, more holiness, more likeness to God, higher attainment in spiritual life, are expected, are demanded."—BROMLEY.

4. *Of a truth this is the Prophet*—The great Prophet, or Teacher, spoken of by Moses, which they improperly distinguished from the Messiah. Some no doubt knew that by the Prophet the Messiah was

meant; but others seem to have thought that one of the ancient prophets should be raised from the dead, and precede the appearing of the Messiah.

5. *Shall Christ come out of Galilee?*—As the prophets had declared that the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah, and from the family of David, and should be born in the city of Bethlehem, these Jews, imagining that Christ had been born in Galilee, concluded that he could not be the Messiah. Had they examined the matter a little farther, they would have found that he had his birth exactly as the prophets had foretold; but, for want of this necessary examination, they continued in unbelief, and rejected the Lord that bought them. Many still lose their souls nearly in the same way. They suffer themselves to be led away by common report, and become prejudiced against the truth, refuse to give it a fair hearing, or to examine for themselves. It is on this ground that deism and irreligion have established themselves, and still maintain their posts.

6. *Never man spake like this man*—Though these officers had gone on the errand of their masters, they had not entered into their spirit. They were sent to apprehend a seditious man, and a false prophet. They came where Jesus taught; they found him to be a different person to the description they received from their masters, and therefore did not attempt to touch or molest him. No doubt they expected, when they told their employers the truth, that they would have commended them, and acknowledged their own mistake; but these simple people were not in the secret of their masters' malice. They heard, they felt, that no man ever spoke with so much grace, power, majesty, and eloquence. They had never heard a discourse so affecting and persuasive. So Jesus still speaks to all who are simple of heart. He speaks pardon, he speaks holiness, he speaks salvation, to all who have ears to hear. No man ever did or can speak as he does. He teaches the truth,

the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

7. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*—Very few. But is this a proof that he is not of God? No, truly. If he were of the world, the world would love its own. The religion of Christ has been in general rejected by the rulers of this world. A life of mortification, self-denial, and humility, does not comport with the views of those who will have their portion in this life. It has ever been a mark of the truth of God, that the great, the mighty, and the wise have in general rejected it. They are too much occupied with this world to attend to the concerns of the next.

8. *Art thou also of Galilee?*—They knew very well that he was not; but they spoke this by way of reproach. As if they had said, "Thou art no better than he is, as

thou takest his part." Many of the Galileans had believed on him, which the Jews considered to be a reproach. Art thou his disciple, as the Galileans are?

9. *Search, and look*—Examine the scriptures, search the public registers, and thou wilt see that "out of Galilee there ariseth no prophet." Neither the Messiah, nor any other prophet, has ever proceeded from Galilee, nor ever can. This conclusion was false and impertinent: False, because Jonah was of Gathheper, in Galilee; the prophet Nahum was also a Galilean, for he was of the tribe of Simeon; and some suppose that Malachi was of the same place. The conclusion was false, because there not having been a prophet from any particular place was no argument that there never could be one, as the place had not been proscribed.

SECTION CXX.—CHRIST'S CONDUCT TO THE ADULTERESS AND HER ACCUSERS.

A. D. 29.

JOHN VIII. 1—11.

JESUS went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; ¹ and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: But what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. ² But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, ³ went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: Go, and sin no more.

1. *A woman taken in adultery*—It is allowed that adultery was exceedingly common at this time, so common that they had ceased to put the law in force against it. The waters of jealousy were no longer drunk, the culprits, or those suspected of this crime, being so very numerous; and the men, who were guilty themselves, dared not try their suspected wives, as it was believed the waters would have no evil effect upon the wife, if the husband himself had been criminal.

2. *That they might have to accuse him*—Had our Lord condemned the woman to death, they might have accused him to Pilate, as arrogating to himself the power of life and death, which the Romans had taken away from the Jews; besides, the Roman laws did not condemn an adulteress to be put to death. On the other hand, if he had said she should not be put to death, they might have represented him to the people as one who decided contrary to the law, and favoured the crime of which the woman was accused.

3. *Being convicted by their own conscience*—So it is likely they were all guilty of similar crimes.

"These men's sins, as they had been secret, so they were forgotten. It is long since they were done, neither did they think to have heard any more news of them. And now, when time and security had quite worn them out of thought, he that shall one day be their Judge calls them to a back reckoning."—BISHOP HALL.

"There is in human nature, however we are to account for it, a great curiosity to discover, and an equal desire to publish, the faults and infirmities of others. Some spend half their time in inquiring and listening after all that is stirring in this way. Not a breath of wind but strikes their ear, if it be loaded with scandal. And then, when once they have heard a story, which demolishes a reputation, how eager they are to make it known to their acquaintance! Tidings like these are frequently uttered, with as much joy and triumph, as if the event were the best that ever befel the utterers in their lives. But

how is this? Are they the better for their neighbour's crimes; or can they really take a pleasure in the thought, that a fellow-creature, and one of the same religion, has been seduced to offend God, and is in danger, without his grace, of perishing eternally? Does this delight their hearts, and make their eyes sparkle? Evil spirits rejoice at the fall and destruction of mankind; but angels mourn, and so should we."—BISHOP HORNE.

The case of the woman taken in adultery, when properly and candidly considered, is both intelligible and edifying. It is likely that the accusation was well founded; and that the scribes and Pharisees endeavoured maliciously to serve themselves of the fact, to embroil our Lord with the civil power, or ruin his moral reputation. Our Lord was no magistrate, and therefore could not, with any propriety, give judgment in the case; had he done it, it must have been considered an invasion of the rights and office of the civil magistrate, and would have afforded them ground for a process against him. On the other hand, had he acquitted the woman, he might have been considered, not only as setting aside the law of Moses, but as being indulgent to a crime of great moral turpitude; and the report of this must have ruined his moral character. He disappointed this malice by refusing to enter into the case; and overwhelmed his adversaries with confusion, by unmasking their hearts, and pointing out their private abominations. It is generally supposed that our Lord acquitted the woman: This is incorrect; he neither acquitted nor condemned her: He did not enter at all juridically into the business. His saying, "Neither do I condemn thee," was no more than a simple declaration that he would not concern himself with the matter, that being the office of the chief magistrate; but, as a preacher of righteousness, he exhorted her to abandon her evil practices, lest the punishment, which she was now likely to escape, should be inflicted on her for a repetition of her transgression.

SECTION CXXI.—CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

A. D. 29.

JOHN VIII. 12—29.

THEN spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world :¹ He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,² but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record³ of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, *yet* my record is true : For I know whence I came,⁴ and whither I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh ;⁵ I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : For I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father ? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father :⁶ If ye had known me,⁷ ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple : And no man laid hands on him ; for his hour was not yet come. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins : Whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself ? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath ;⁸ I am from above : Ye are of this world ; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : For if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ?⁹ And Jesus saith unto them, *Even the same* that I said unto you from the beginning.¹⁰ I have many things to say and to judge of you :¹¹ But he that sent me is true ;¹² and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up¹³ the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself ; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me : The Father hath not left me alone ;¹⁴ for I do always those things that please him.

1. *I am the light of the world*—The Fountain whence all intellectual light and spiritual understanding proceed : “ Without me, all is darkness, misery, and death.”

2. *Shall not walk in darkness*—He shall be saved from ignorance, infidelity, and sin.

If he follow me, become my disciple, and believe on my name, he shall have my Spirit to bear witness with his, that he is a child of God. He shall have the light of life ; such a light as brings and supports life. The sun, the fountain of light, is

also the fountain of life; by his vivifying influences all things live; neither animal nor vegetative life could exist were it not for his influence. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is the Fountain of all spiritual and eternal life. His light brings life with it; and they who walk in his light live in his life.

3. *Thou bearest record*—As if they had said, “Dost thou imagine that we shall believe thee, in a matter so important, on thy bare assertion?” Had these people attended to the teaching and miracles of Christ, they would have seen that his pretensions to the Messiahship were supported by the most irrefragable testimony.

4. *I know whence I came*—I came from God, and am going to God; and can neither do nor say any thing but what leads to, and glorifies, him.

5. *Ye judge after the flesh*—Because I appear in the form of man, judging from this appearance, ye think I am but a mere man. Pay attention to my teaching and miracles, and ye shall then see that nothing less than infinite wisdom, and unlimited power, could teach and do what I have taught and performed. Our Lord speaks here exactly in the character of an ambassador. Such a person does not bring a second with him to vouch his truth; his credentials from his king ascertain his character; he represents the king's person. So our Lord represents the Father as bearing witness with him. The miracles which he wrought were the proof from heaven that he was the promised Messiah; these were the great seal of all his pretensions.

6. *Ye neither know me, nor my Father*—Ye know neither the Messiah, nor the God that sent him.

7. *If ye had known me*—If ye had received my teaching, ye would have got such an acquaintance with the nature and attributes of God, as ye never could have had, and never can have, any other way. That is a true saying, “No man hath seen God at any time! The only-begotten Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The nature and perfections of God never can be properly known but in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is worthy of remark, that, in all this discourse, our blessed Lord ever speaks of the Father and himself as two

distinct Persons. Therefore the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, as some persons vainly imagine; though it is plain enough that the completest unity and equality subsists between them.

8. *Ye are from beneath*—Ye are capable of murder and self-murder, too, because ye have nothing of God in you. Ye are altogether earthly, sensual, and devilish. They verified this character in murdering the Lord Jesus; and many of them afterwards, to escape famine, &c., put an end to their own lives.

9. *Who art thou?*—This marks the indignation of the Pharisees; as if they had said, “Who art thou that takest upon thee to deal out threatenings in this manner against us?”

10. *Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning*—Rather, “Just what I have already told you,” that is, that “I am the light of the world,” the Christ, the Saviour of mankind.

11. *I have many things to say and to judge of you*—Or, “To speak and to condemn,” &c. I could speedily expose all your iniquities, your pride and ambition, your hypocrisy and irreligion, your hatred to the light, and your malice against the truth, together with the present obstinate unbelief of your hearts, and show that these are the reasons why I say you will die in your sins; but these will appear in their true light when, after you have crucified me, the judgments of God shall descend upon and consume you.

12. *He that sent me is true*—Whatever he hath spoken of you by the prophets shall surely come to pass; his word cannot fail.

13. *When ye have lifted up*—When ye have crucified me, and thus filled up the measure of your iniquities, ye shall know that I am the Christ, by the signs that shall follow; and ye shall know that what I spoke is true, by the judgments that shall follow.

14. *The Father hath not left me alone*—Though ye shall have power to put me to death, yet this shall not be because he hath abandoned me. No; he is ever with me, because I do that which pleaseth him; and it is his pleasure that I should lay down my life for the salvation of the world. Does not our Lord allude to the following scriptures? “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Mine ears hast thou opened;”

or, "A body hast thou prepared me." "Then said I, Lo, I come: This is written in the volume of the book concerning me. I delight to do thy will, O my God! Thy law is in my heart?"

"To point out the secret link which connects the sufferings of the present life with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed; to certify us, that, to the man of obedient faith, and pious resignation, and humble love, all things—the most adverse, the most afflictive, the most calamitous—shall work

together for his eternal good; to discover to us with such certainty and clearness, that the fiery ordeal through which, in this probationary state, we are called to pass, is only designed to purify and prepare us for the bright and peaceful scenes of a blissful immortality: This was reserved for the time when God should speak unto the world by his Son; when truth should reach its meridian, and the best and latest dispensation be given to the sons of men."—BROMLEY.

SECTION CXXII.—THE VAIN PRETENSIONS OF THE JEWS EXPOSED.

A.D. 29.

JOHN VIII. 30—47.

As he spake these words, many believed on him.¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word,² *then* are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth,³ and the truth shall make you free.⁴ They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: ⁵ How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house ⁶ for ever: *But* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.⁷ I speak that which I have seen with my Father: And ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.⁸ But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: This did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.⁹ Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: ¹⁰ For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word.¹¹ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father¹² ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,¹³ and abode not in the truth,¹⁴ because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: For he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you

convinceth me of sin?¹⁵ And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God¹⁶ heareth God's words: Ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

1. *As he spake these words, many believed on him*—The same sun that hardens the clay softens the wax. This discourse, which proved the savour of death unto death to the obstinate Pharisees, became the savour of life unto life to many of the simple-hearted people.

2. *If ye continue in my word*—Or, “in this doctrine of mine.” It is not enough to receive God's truth; we must retain and walk in it. And it is only when we receive the truth, love it, keep it, and walk in it, that we are the genuine disciples of Christ.

3. *Ye shall know the truth*—Shall have a constant experimental knowledge of its power and efficacy.

4. *And the truth shall make you free*—It was a maxim of the Jews, that no man was free, but he who exercised himself in the meditation of the law. No man is truly free, but he in whose heart the power of sin is destroyed, and who has received the Spirit of adoption, through which he cries, “Abba! Father!” The bondage of sin is the most grievous bondage; and freedom from its guilt and influence is the greatest liberty.

5. *We were never in bondage to any man*—This assertion was not only false, but it was ridiculous in the extreme; seeing their whole history, sacred and profane, is full of recitals of their servitude in Egypt, in Chaldea, under the Persians; under the Macedonians, and under the Romans. But those who are not under the influence of the truth of God will speak and act according to the influence of the spirit of falsehood and error. If the words are to be restrained to themselves alone, they may be understood thus: “We are Abraham's seed; and we were never in bondage.” Both these propositions had a faint shadow of truth.

6. *And the servant abideth not in the house*—Or, rather, “Now the slave abideth not in the family.” As if Jesus had said: “And now that I am speaking of a slave, I will add one thing more; namely, a slave has no right to any part of the inheritance in the family to which he belongs; but the

son, the legitimate son, has a right. He can make any servant of the family free, though no slave can. He can divide or bestow the inheritance as he pleases.” Our Lord seems here to refer to the sending away of Ishmael. Only those who are genuine children can inherit the estate. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

7. *My word hath no place in you*—Or, “This doctrine of mine hath no place in you.” Ye hear the truths of God, but ye do not heed them; the word of life has no influence over you; and how can it, when you seek to kill me because I proclaim this truth to you? It is a dismal omen, when a person is regardless of the truth of God; it is more so to be provoked against it; but to persecute and endeavour to destroy those who preach it, is the last degree of perverseness and obduracy. The word of God requires a heart which is empty. A heart filled with earthly projects, carnal interests, ambition, thoughts of raising a fortune, and with the love of the superfluities and pleasures of life, is not fit to receive the seed of the kingdom. When a man shuts his heart against it by his passions, he at the same time opens it to all sorts of crimes.

8. *Ye would do the works of Abraham*—As the son has the nature of his father in him, and naturally imitates him, so, if ye were the children of Abraham, ye would imitate him in his faith, obedience, and uprightness; but this ye do not, for ye seek to kill me—ye are watching for an opportunity to destroy me, merely because I tell you the truth: Abraham never did any thing like this; therefore, you have no spiritual relationship to him.

9. *Ye do the deeds of your father*—You have certainly another father than Abraham—one who has instilled his own malignant nature into you; and, as ye seek to murder me for telling you the truth, ye must be the offspring of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth.

10. *If God were your Father, ye would love me*—I came from God, and it

would be absurd to suppose that you would persecute me if you were under the influence of God. The children of the same father should not murder each other.

11. *Because ye cannot hear my word*—That is, ye cannot bear my doctrine; it comes too close to you; it searches your hearts, detects your hypocrisy, and exposes your iniquitous intentions and designs; and as ye are determined not to leave your sins, so ye are purposed not to hear my doctrine.

12. *The lusts of your father*—Like father, like son. What satan desires, ye desire; because ye are filled with his nature. Awful state of unregenerate men! They have the nearest alliance to satan; they partake of his nature, and have in them the same principles and propensities which characterize the very nature and essence of the devil! Reader, canst thou rest in this state? Apply to God, through Christ, that thou mayest be born again.

13. *He was a murderer from the beginning*—It was through him that Adam transgressed; in consequence of which death entered into the world, and slew him and all his posterity.

14. *Abode not in the truth*—"He stood not in the truth:" Was once in a state of glorious felicity, but fell from it; and, being deprived of all good himself, he could not

endure that others should enjoy any; therefore by his lies he deceived Eve, and brought her, her husband, and, through them, their posterity, into his own condemnation. The original state of satan is here pointed out: "He abode not in the truth." Therefore he was once in the truth, in righteousness and true holiness; and he fell from that truth into sin and falsehood, so that he became the father of lies and the first murderer. Our Lord confirms here the Mosaic account of the fall of man, and shows that this fall was brought about by his lies, and that these lies issued in the murder or destruction both of the body and soul of man.

15. *Which of you convinceth me of sin?*—Do you pretend to reject the truths which I announce, because my life does not correspond to the doctrines I have taught? But can any of you prove me guilty of any fault? You have maliciously watched all my steps; have you seen the smallest matter to reprove, in any part of my conduct?

16. *He that is of God*—Meaning probably himself: He who came from God, or was born of God; "heareth the words of God," has the constant inspiration of his Spirit, speaks nothing but truth, and cannot possibly err.

SECTION CXXIII.—THE JEWS ATTEMPT TO STONE CHRIST.

A. D. 29.

JOHN VIII. 48—59.

THEN answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil;¹ but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory:² There is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.³ Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: Whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your

God : Yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : And if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you : But I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day : And he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham ? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.⁴ Then took they up stones to cast at him : But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

1. *I have not a devil*—The first part of the charge was too futile ; if taken literally, it was both absurd and impossible : They did not believe it themselves, and therefore our Lord does not stop a moment to refute it ; but he answers to the second with the utmost meekness and conclusiveness : “ I honour God.” This is what no demon can do, nor any man who is under such influence.

2. *I seek not mine own glory*—Another proof that I am not influenced by any spirit but that which proceeds from God. But “ there is one that seeketh,” that is, “ my glory,” “ and judgeth,” will punish you for your determined obstinacy and iniquity.

3. *Shall never see death*—As Moses promised a long life, with abundance of temporal blessings, to those who should keep his statutes and ordinances ; so he who keeps my doctrine shall not only have a long life, but “ shall never see death ;” he shall never come under the power of the death of the soul, but shall live eternally with me in glory.

“ The declaration necessarily implies, that if a man do not keep his saying, he must see death. What it is to see death, primeval death, the death which forms the natural, the original punishment of sin ; what spectral sights, what openings into damnation, what snaky, dragon, demon shapes may burst on the impure, impenitent soul, as it quits the body ;—I know not ; I never wish to know. But all this woe, on earth unknown, unconceived ; all this is implied in the dreadful word ‘ death ;’ and most assuredly awaits the man who lives and dies unchanged, unsanctified, unforgiven.”—BROMLEY.

4. *Before Abraham was, I am*—The following is a literal translation of Calmet’s

note on this passage : “ I am from all eternity. I have existed before all ages. You consider in me only the person who speaks to you, and who has appeared to you within a particular time. But besides this human nature, which ye think ye know, there is in me a divine and eternal nature ; both, united, subsist together in my person. Abraham knew how to distinguish them : He adored me as his God, and desired me as his Saviour. He has seen me in my eternity ; and he predicted my coming into the world.”

In several places in this chapter, our Lord shows his intimate union with the Father, both in will, doctrine, and deed ; and though he never speaks so as to confound the Persons, yet he evidently shows, that such was the indivisible unity subsisting between the Father and the Son, that what the one witnessed, the other witnessed ; what the one did, the other did ; and that he who saw the one, necessarily saw the other.

The patience and meekness exercised by our Lord towards his most fell and unrelenting enemies, are worthy the especial regard of all those who are persecuted for righteousness : “ When he was reviled, he reviled not again.” As the Searcher of hearts, he simply declared their state, John viii. 44, in order to their conviction and conversion. Not to have done so, would have been to betray their souls. In this part of his conduct we find two grand virtues united, which are rarely associated in man, —meekness and fidelity : Patience to bear all insults and personal injuries ; and boldness, in the face of persecution and death, to declare the truth. The meek man generally leaves the sinner unreprieved. The bold and zealous man often betrays

a want of due self-management; and re- proves sin in a spirit which prevents the reproof from reaching the heart. In this respect, also, our blessed Lord has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. Let him that readeth, understand.

SECTION CXXIV.—THE SEVENTY RETURN WITH JOY.

A.D. 29.

LUKE X. 17—24.

AND the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld satan¹ as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents² and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: And nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.³ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid⁴ these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: And no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*. And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

1. *I beheld satan*—Or, “satan himself,” “the very satan, the supreme adversary;” falling as lightning, with the utmost suddenness, as a flash of lightning falls from the clouds, and at the same time in the most observable manner. The fall was both very sudden and very apparent. Thus should the fall of the corrupt Jewish state be, and thus was the fall of idolatry in the Gentile world.

“Upon the kingdom of satan our Lord was making war, both by casting out devils by his word or by his name, and by rescuing the souls of men from his power, by the hallowing influence of his heavenly doctrine. Even by his weak and despised disciples was he effecting this casting down of satan from the heaven of that dominion he had so long held. But he promises to render those disciples still more formidable

to the kingdom of darkness, by increasing those miraculous endowments with which he had already enriched them, which was fulfilled at the day of pentecost. ‘And nothing shall by any means hurt you;’ that is, nothing shall hinder you as to your work, which shall prevail against all opposition; or injure you personally: No affliction being permitted till it shall turn out for the furtherance of the gospel, and your spiritual welfare, and the greatest tyrants not being able to inflict death upon you until your death itself shall be a benefit, and not an evil, both to yourselves and to the cause in which you suffer.”—R. WATSON.

2. *To tread on serpents, &c.*—It is possible that by serpents and scorpions our Lord means the scribes and Pharisees, whom he calls “serpents,” and a “brood

of vipers," because, through the subtilty and venom of the old serpent, the devil, they opposed him and his doctrine; and, by "trampling" on these, it is likely that he means, they should get a complete victory over such; as it was an ancient custom to trample on the kings and generals who had been taken in battle, to signify the complete conquest which had been gained over them.

3. *Because your names are written in heaven*—This form of speech is taken from the ancient custom of writing the names of all the citizens in a public register, that the several families might be known, and the inheritances properly preserved. This custom is still observed, even in these kingdoms, though not particularly noticed. Every child that is born in the land is ordered to be registered, with the names of its parents, and the time when born, baptized, or registered; and this register is generally kept in the parish church, or in some public place of safety. Such a register as this is called in Philip. iv. 3; and Rev. iii. 5, &c., "the book of life;" that is, the book or register where the persons were enrolled as they came into life. It appears also probable, that when any person died, or behaved improperly, his name was sought out and erased from the book, to prevent any confusion that might happen in consequence of improper persons laying claim to an estate, and to cut off the unworthy from the rights and privileges of the peaceable, upright citizens.

4. *Thou hast hid*—That is, thou hast not revealed them to the scribes and Pharisees, who idolized their own wisdom; but

thou hast revealed them to the simple and humble of heart.

"The scribe, the disputer, the philosopher, were all confounded, when it pleased God, by the instrumentality of these simple men, to fill the earth with the profoundest wisdom on all theological and moral subjects, and to implant a system which all foresaw must ultimately absorb all others, and by the very force of its own internal evidence fix an everlasting conviction of its truth and divinity in the hearts of men. In fact, the true Christian ministry is the most wonderful institution ever introduced among mankind. It is that which gives a new life to the soul, creates a new order of feelings, awakens men out of the sleep of sin, leads them in penitence and prayer to God, produces such a trust in Christ as is followed by peace of conscience, and the supporting assurance of the friendship of God, inspires man with a moral power which he has not by nature; exerts a sanctifying influence upon his affections, raises him into the condition of a spiritual man, and completes its high office by presenting the souls which it has trained under its godly discipline, purged from every spot of sin, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Such effects produced by the visible agency of weak and inefficient men, and hence called 'babes,' implies, necessarily, the constant agency of God in its most gracious and condescending, as well as powerful, operations; and under these views our Lord offers this thanksgiving, and acknowledges the wondrous work of God."—R. WATSON.

SECTION CXXV.—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

A. D. 29.

LUKE X. 25—37.

AND, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: This do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to

justify himself,¹ said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, a certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite,² when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan,³ as he journeyed, came where he was: And when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*, and went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,⁴ and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy⁵ on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.⁶

1. *Willing to justify himself*—Wishing to make it appear, that he was a righteous man, and that consequently he was in the straight road to the kingdom of God, said, "Who is my neighbour?" supposing our Lord would have at once answered, "Every Jew is to be considered as such, and the Jews only." Now, as he imagined, he had never been deficient in his conduct to any person of his own nation, he thought he had amply fulfilled the law. This is the sense in which the Jews understood the word "neighbour." But our Lord shows here, that the acts of kindness which a man is bound to perform to his neighbour when in distress, he should perform to any person, of whatever nation, religion, or kindred, whom he finds in necessity.

2. *A priest, and likewise a Levite*—Priest and Levite are mentioned here, partly because they were the most frequent travellers on this road, and partly to show that these were the persons who, from the nature of their office, were most obliged to perform works of mercy; and from whom a person in distress had a right to expect immediate succour and comfort; and their inhuman conduct here was a flat breach of the law.

3. *A certain Samaritan*—Samaritan is mentioned merely to show that he was a

person from whom a Jew had no right to expect any help or relief, because of the enmity which subsisted between the two nations.

4. *Pouring in oil and wine*—These, beaten together, appear to have been used formerly as a common medicine for fresh wounds. Bind up a fresh cut immediately in a soft rag or lint, moistened with pure olive oil, and the parts will heal by what is called the "first intention," and more speedily than by any other means.

5. *He that shewed mercy*—Or, "so much mercy." His prejudice would not permit him to name the Samaritan, yet his conscience obliged him to acknowledge, that he was the only righteous person of the three.

6. *Go, and do thou likewise*—Be even to thy enemy in distress as kind, humane, and merciful, as this Samaritan was. As the distress was on the part of a Jew, and the relief was afforded by a Samaritan, the lawyer, to be consistent with the decision he had already given, must feel the force of our Lord's inference, that it was his duty to act to any person, of whatever nation or religion he might be, as this Samaritan had acted toward his countryman. It is very likely that what our Lord relates here was a real matter of fact, and not a parable;

otherwise the captious lawyer might have objected, that no such case had ever existed, and that any inference drawn from it was only begging the question; but as he was, in all probability, in possession of the fact himself, he was forced to acknowledge the propriety of our Lord's inference and advice.

"Let us 'go and do likewise,' regarding every man as our neighbour who needs our assistance. Let us renounce that bigotry and party zeal which would contract our hearts into an insensibility for all the human race, but a small number, whose sentiments and practices are so much our own, that our love to them is but self-love reflected. With an honest openness of mind let us always remember the kindred between man and man, and cultivate that happy instinct whereby, in the original constitution of our nature, God has strongly bound us to each other."—WESLEY.

"The great moral was explicitly laid down: 'Go, and do thou likewise;' compassionate and relieve the distressed, without any respect to nation or religion; be a

neighbour to every man that needs thy assistance, and consider him thy neighbour, one who, according to the law, thou art to love as thyself. Thus our Lord teacher, that this law is binding upon all men, and that all men are neighbours of each other. He breaks down, as to the obligations of this great social statute, all the distinction of nation and religion, all the divisions created by interests and partial affections, erects the whole community of man into one neighbourhood, and binds each individual to serve another by all kinds of good offices."—R. WATSON.

"There is not an African, wandering over the sands of his sun-burnt continent; there is not a native American, hidden in the depths of those all but boundless forests; there is not an Asiatic, prone before his hideous, mis-shapen idol; there is not a New-Zealander, devouring the flesh of the man he has just slain; but what, in a most true and affecting sense, is your brother! I say, then, think of him, feel for him, pray for him, and if you can do any thing to better his condition, do it."—BROMLEY.

SECTION CXXVI.—CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF MARTHA.

A.D. 29.

LUKE X. 38—42.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered¹ about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care² that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.³ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: And Mary hath chosen that good part,⁴ which shall not be taken away from her.

1. *Martha was cumbered*—She was harassed with different cares and employments at the same time; one drawing one way, and another, another: A proper description of a worldly mind. But in Martha's favour it may be justly said, that all her anxiety was to provide suitable and timely entertainment for our Lord and his

disciples; for this is the sense in which the word "serving" should be taken. And we should not, on the merest supposition, attribute earthly-mindedness to a woman whose character stands unimpeachable in the gospel; and who, by entertaining Christ and his disciples, and providing liberally for them, gave the highest proof

that she was influenced by liberality and benevolence, and not by parsimony or covetousness.

“When ministers of the gospel are invited, they may sometimes have reason to suppose, that some part of the apparatus they meet with may be intended as a mark of regard and attention to them; and it has the appearance of ingratitude, to blame our friends for their kindness; but some of us would be better pleased to be treated less sumptuously, and in a way more conformable to the simplicity of our Christian profession. We would not wish to be considered as avowed epicures, who cannot dine well without a variety of delicacies; and if we could suppose, that such cost and variety were designed to remind us how much better we fare abroad than at home, we might think it rather an insult than a compliment.”—J. NEWTON.

2. *Dost thou not care*—Dost thou not think it wrong, that my sister thus leaves me to provide and prepare this supper, alone?

3. *Help me*—Order her to unite her skill and strength with mine, that the present business may be done with that speed and in that order which the necessity and importance of the case demand.

4. *Mary hath chosen that good part*—That is, of hearing my word, of which she shall not be deprived; it being at present of infinitely greater importance to attend to my teaching than to attend to any domestic concerns. While thou art busily employed in providing that portion of perishing food for perishing bodies, Mary has chosen that spiritual portion which endures for ever, and “which shall not be taken away

from her;” therefore I cannot command her to leave her present employment, and go and help thee to bring forward a variety of matters, which are by no means necessary at this time.

That the salvation of the soul is the first and greatest of all human concerns, every man must acknowledge, who feels that he has a soul; and in humility of mind to hear Jesus, is the only way of getting that acquaintance with the doctrine of salvation without which how can ye be saved? While we fancy we are in no spiritual necessity, the things which concern salvation will not appear needful to us! A conviction that we are spiritually poor must precede our application for the true riches. “The whole,” says Christ, “need not the physician, but those who are sick.” Martha has been blamed, by incautious people, as possessing a carnal, worldly spirit; and as Mary Magdalene has been made the chief of all prostitutes, so has Martha of all the worldly-minded. Through her affectionate respect for our Lord and his disciples, and through that alone, she erred. There is not the slightest intimation that she was either worldly-minded or careless about her soul; nor was she at this time improperly employed, only so far as the abundance of her affection led her to make a greater provision than was necessary on the occasion. Nor are our Lord’s words to be understood as a reproof; they are a kind and tender exhortation, tending to vindicate the conduct of Mary. The utmost that can be said on the subject is, Martha was well employed, but Mary, on this occasion, better.

SECTION CXXVII.—JESUS CHRIST TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XI. 1—13.

AND it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray,¹ as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us

our sins ; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not : The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask,² and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent ? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : How much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?³

1. *Teach us to pray*.—The prayer related here by Luke is not precisely the same as that mentioned by Matthew ; and indeed it is not likely that it was given at the same time. That in Matthew seems to have been given after the second passover ; and this in Luke was given probably after the third passover, between the feasts of tabernacles, and the dedication.

“ The argument to encourage earnest perseverance in prayer, derives its force from contrast : If a churlish man will yield to importunity, how much more shall the blessed God himself, who is perfect benevolence, and delights in bestowing his benefits upon the needy, answer the reiterated requests of those that call upon him ? The whole tends to impress us with the necessity of obtaining the fulfilment of our petitions, and thus to guard against a common and fatal evil, that of resting in prayer as an *end*, without regarding it but as a *means* of obtaining the petitions we present. How many rest here ! They have done a duty, that is enough ! which is a fatal infatuation. If we have not received what we ask, hitherto we have prayed in vain : And we are at once reminded, that the end of praying is receiving, and encouraged to repeat our requests by the assur-

ance that they must be ultimately successful.”—R. WATSON.

2. *And, or “ therefore,” I say unto you, Ask*.—Be importunate with God, not so much to prevail on him to save you, as to get yourselves brought into a proper disposition to receive that mercy which he is ever disposed to give. He who is not importunate for the salvation of his soul does not feel the need of being saved ; and were God to communicate his mercy to such, they could not be expected to be grateful for it, as favours are only prized and esteemed in proportion to the sense men have of their necessity and importance.

3. *Much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*.—“ Nor is this to be confined to the first disciples, since it is as extensive as the duty of importunate prayer, which our Lord had been urging. If the duty be therefore universal, then is the promise universal, and every one who importunately prays shall receive the Holy Spirit. It follows, therefore, that the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, such as some, but by no means a large proportion, of the primitive Christians were endowed with, could not be intended. These were always partial in extent, and we know, in fact, that they

were temporary in duration ; and yet the duty of prayer is binding upon all, in all ages, and the promise of the Holy Spirit still stands as our encouragement to their exercise. His gracious influence upon the mind must, therefore, be intended to enlighten, to invigorate, to quicken, to purify, and to comfort us. This is the introduction of a new power into the heart of man, even the restoring and sanctifying influence of

God, which all who seek shall find, whilst all who find it are raised above their former selves, and become new creatures."—
R. WATSON.

"This promise assures to us the continual presence and influence of the Holy Ghost, for all the purposes of guidance and direction, of grace and assistance, of comfort and support, in our Christian course."
—TILLOTSON.

SECTION CXXVIII.—THE PHARISEES AND LAWYERS REPROACHED.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XI. 37—54.

AND as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : And he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter ; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. *Ye* fools, did not he that made that which is without¹ make that which is within also ? But rather give alms of such things as ye have ;² and, behold, all things are clean unto you. But woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God : These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not,³ and the men that walk over *them* are not aware *of them*. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, *Master*, thus saying thou reproachest us⁴ also. And he said, Woe unto you also, *ye* lawyers ! for ye lade men with burdens⁵ grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe unto you ! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers : For they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute : That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple : Verily, I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers !

for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : Ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things : Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

1. *Did not he that made that which is without*—Did not the maker of the dish form it so, both outwardly and inwardly, as to answer the purpose for which it was made ? And can it answer this purpose without being clean in the inside, as well as on the outside ? God has made you such, both as to your bodies and souls, as he intended should show forth his praise ; but can you think that the purpose of God can be accomplished by you, while you only attend to external legal purifications, your hearts being full of rapine and wickedness ? How unthinking are you to imagine, that God can be pleased with this outward purification, when all within is unholy !

2. *Give alms of such things as ye have*—Meaning either what was within the dishes spoken of before ; or what was within their houses or power ; or what they had at hand. Cease from rapine : Far from spoiling the poor by wicked exactions, rather give them alms of every thing you possess ; and when a part of every thing you have is sincerely consecrated to God for the use of the poor, then all that remains will be clean unto you ; you will have the blessing of God in your basket and store, and every thing will be sanctified to you.

3. *Ye are as graves which appear not*—“Hidden tombs,” graves which were not distinguished by any outward decorations, and were not elevated above the ground, so that those who walked over them did not consider what corruption was within ; so they, under the veil of hypocrisy, covered their iniquities, so that those who had any intercourse or connexion with them did not perceive what accomplished knaves they had to do with.

4. *Thou reproachest us*—He alone who searches the heart could unmask these hypocrites ; and he did it so effectually, that their own consciences acknowledged the guilt, and re-echoed their own reproach.

“While men maintain integrity of character, they are generally regarded with respect and esteem : But when they are detected in acts of injustice and fraud, the public confidence is withdrawn ; their families are covered with shame and dishonour ; the men who formerly admired and esteemed them shun their company ; and the unhappy offenders against the laws of justice and truth retire from the gaze of the multitude, and seek a refuge in the grave. Many a man is thus disgraced in honourable society, and many a name is stigmatized on the page of history, by the just judgment of God !”—T. JACKSON.

5. *Ye lade men with burdens*—By insisting on the observance of the traditions of the elders ; to which it appears, by the way, they paid no great attention themselves.

A minister of the gospel of God should, above all men, be continent of his tongue ; his enemies, in certain cases, will crowd question upon question, in order so to puzzle and confound him, that he may speak unadvisedly with his lips, and thus prejudice the truth he was labouring to promote and defend. The following is a good prayer, which all who are called to defend or proclaim the truths of the gospel may confidently offer to their God : “Let thy wisdom and light, O Lord, disperse their artifice and my darkness ! Cast the bright beams of thy light upon those who have to defend themselves against subtle and deceitful men ! Raise and animate their hearts, that they may not be wanting to the cause of truth. Guide their tongue, that they may not be deficient in prudence, nor expose thy truth by any indiscretions or unseasonable transports of zeal. Let meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering influence and direct their hearts ; and may they ever feel the full weight of that truth : ‘The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God !’”

SECTION CXXIX.—THE DISCIPLES CAUTIONED
AGAINST HYPOCRISY.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XII. 1—12.

IN the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him,¹ which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore:² Ye are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me³ before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and *unto* magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

1. *Fear him*—Even the friends of God are commanded to fear God, as a Being who has authority to send both body and soul into hell. Therefore it is proper even for the most holy persons to maintain a fear of God, as the punisher of all unrighteousness. A man has but one life to lose, and one soul to save; and it is madness to sacrifice the salvation of the soul to the preservation of the life.

2. *Fear not therefore*—Want of faith in the providence and goodness of God, is the source of all human inquietudes and fears. He has undertaken to save and defend those to the uttermost who trust in him. His wisdom cannot be surprised, his power

cannot be forced, his love cannot forget itself. Man distrusts God, and fears that he is forgotten by him, because he judges of God by himself; and he knows that he is apt to forget his Maker, and be unfaithful to him.

“A general providence must, in the nature of things, include a particular one. God cannot superintend the larger parts of the universe without taking care of the most minute parts. The all-wise and all-gracious Being who created all things, he is the Preserver as well as the Creator of every thing that exists. As no part of his universe can be neglected or overlooked by him, so no circumstance, however trivial,

in the history of any individual, is beneath his notice. No created thing can continue either to exist or to act independently of him. He governs each individual with the same care and attention that he pays to the whole. Indeed, if this were not the case, his attention would be imperfect, and his agency defective. Little things, if not superintended, would quickly interfere with great and general plans. How trivial a circumstance would, in a moment, spoil the most complicated and beautiful piece of machinery! If the hairs of our head were not all numbered, how soon might one become the instrument of death! Our difficulty of conception on this great subject is the inevitable result of our imperfect knowledge of the attributes and powers of an infinite Being."—THEOPHILUS LESSEY.

3. *I say, Whosoever shall confess me—* "To confess Christ includes the following particulars: (1.) Public union with his church, so that we bear his name. (2.) Regular participation of the Lord's supper, by which we "show forth his death until he come;" that is, not only declare the historical fact, but confess our trust in it as the grand sacrifice for sin. (3.) Regular attendance, when able, upon public worship, especially upon the Christian sabbath, which is "the Lord's day," the day on which his praises are celebrated by the church universal, and his gospel proclaimed in their assemblies. (4.) Submitting to reproach, loss, and suffering, when we might avoid them by complying with something contrary to the will of Christ, or ceasing to do what he has enjoined. This

is to confess Christ before men, because it is a most unequivocal declaration that we prefer obeying him with cheerful affection, to any immediate interest of our own. (5.) To confess Christ, is to show, without affectation or restraint, by the spirit and character of our social conversation and habitual conduct, that we have a constant respect to his glory and the laws of his religion; that we delight in them; that we have given up ourselves to their influence; and that we walk as in the presence of our Master. To all such persons, Christ promises a public acknowledgment before the angels of God; referring, no doubt, to his second coming. On the other hand, to deny Christ, as it is spoken of those who profess to be his disciples, must include, (1.) Open apostasy from his religion: Or, (2.) The neglect of all those things by which Christ is confessed, as public worship, and receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper: Or, (3.) A denying him in works, that is, throwing off his authority in our conversation and conduct, so as not to be habitually controlled by it: Or, (4.) A cowardly desertion of duty to avoid reproach, loss, or suffering; for then we deny Christ by acting as though we belonged to another master: Or, (5.) Hearing his truth and religion assaulted and defamed in guilty silence. All such persons would give worlds indeed to be acknowledged to be Christ's disciples in that great day of final decision to which he refers; but they shall be denied and rejected. Let the undecided meditate on this solemn subject." —R. WATSON.

SECTION CXXX.—COVETOUSNESS TO BE AVOIDED.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XII. 13—21.

AND one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide¹ the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge² or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance³ of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he

thought within himself,⁴ saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down⁵ my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods⁶ laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.⁷ But God said unto him, *Thou fool,*⁸ this night⁹ thy soul shall be required of thee: Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he¹⁰ that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.¹¹

1. *Speak to my brother, that he divide*—Among the Jews, the children had the inheritance of their fathers divided among them; the eldest had a double portion, but all the rest had equal parts. It is likely the person complained of in the text was the elder brother; and he wished to keep the whole to himself; a case which is far from being uncommon. The spirit of covetousness cancels all bonds and obligations, makes wrong right, and cares nothing for father or brother.

2. *A judge*—Without some judgment given in the case, no division could be made; therefore Jesus added the word "judge." A minister of Christ ought not to concern himself with secular affairs, any farther than charity and the order of discipline require it. Our Lord could have decided this difference in a moment; but the example of a perfect disengagement from worldly things was more necessary for the ministers of his church, than that of a charity applying itself to temporal concerns. He who preaches salvation to all should never make himself a party man; otherwise he loses the confidence, and, consequently, the opportunity, of doing good to the party against whom he decides. Better to leave all these things to the civil magistrate, unless where a lawsuit may be prevented, and the matter decided to the satisfaction or acquiescence of both parties.

3. *Consisteth not in the abundance*—That is, "dependeth not on the abundance." It is not superfluities that support man's life, but necessities. What is necessary, God gives liberally; what is superfluous, he has not promised. Nor can a man's life be preserved by the abundance of his possessions.

4. *He thought within himself*—Began

to be puzzled in consequence of the increase of his goods. Riches, though ever so well acquired, produce nothing but vexation and embarrassment.

"There is no allusion to God, as the Giver of the good in which he delighted; there is no acknowledgment of dependence; there is no aspiration of gratitude. He looks with complacency on the amount of his possessions; and then, in the inflation of vanity, and in the calculating spirit of worldly wisdom, he proceeds to arrange his plans, as if perfectly independent of all obligations and of all responsibility to a superior Being. Had he cultivated correct dispositions, there would have been, when he 'thought within himself,' an immediate thanksgiving to his Maker; the pouring forth of the heart in devotion and praise in the recognition of his mercy."—J. PARSONS.

5. *I will pull down, &c.*—The rich are full of designs concerning this life, but in general take no thought about eternity till the time that their goods and their lives are both taken away.

"Ought there not to have been some act of charity to man, or some gift to the temple of God? Would it not have been well, had he determined to appropriate a portion of his resources, to supply the wants and ameliorate the woes, of the wretched, or to offer support and augmented dignity to the worship of Jehovah?"—J. PARSONS.

6. *Soul, thou hast much goods*—Great possessions are generally accompanied with pride, idleness, and luxury; and these are the greatest enemies to salvation. "Moderate poverty," as one justly observes, "is a great talent in order to salvation; but it is one which nobody desires."

7. *Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be*

merry—This was exactly the creed of the ancient atheists and Epicureans. What a wretched portion for an immortal spirit! and yet those who know not God have no other, and many of them not even this.

8. *Thou fool!*—To imagine that a man's comfort and peace can depend upon temporal things; or to suppose that these can satisfy the wishes of an immortal spirit!

9. *This night*—How awful was this saying! He had just made the necessary arrangements for the gratification of his sensual appetites; and, in the very night in which he had finally settled all his plans, his soul was called into the eternal world! What a dreadful awakening of a soul, long asleep in sin! He is now hurried into the presence of his Maker; none of his worldly goods can accompany him, and he has not a particle of heavenly treasure!

“This event comprehends his removal from the substance on which he had doted. His toil, his scheming, his rising early, his sitting up late, his eating the bread of carefulness, were now to end, and to be discovered as having been rendered

is vain. To all that he had acquired he was to bid farewell; other hands were to seize the treasures he had amassed; to him they were to become as though they had never been. Such is the termination which all the children of prosperity have to anticipate! From the fruits and worldly recompence of labour, the hand of death is ere long to tear them away.”

—J. PARSONS.

10. *So is he*—That is, “Thus will it be.” This is not an individual case; all who make this life their portion, and who are destitute of the peace and salvation of God, shall, sooner or later, be surprised in the same way.

11. *Layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*—This is the essential characteristic of a covetous man: He desires riches; he gets them; he lays them up, not for the necessary uses to which they might be devoted, but for himself; to please himself, and to gratify his avaricious soul. Such a person is commonly called a “miser;” that is, literally, a “wretched, miserable man.”

SECTION CXXXI.—CAUTIONS AGAINST CARKING CARES.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XII. 22—34.

AND he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment. Consider the ravens: For they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: How much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: They toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: ¹ And your Father knoweth that ye have need of

these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; ² for it is your Father's good pleasure ³ to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, ⁴ and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, ⁵ neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, ⁶ there will your heart be also.

1. *All these things do the nations of the world seek after*—This is the employment of the nations of this world, utterly regardless of God and eternity! It is the essence of Heathenism, to live only for this life; and it is the property of Christianity, to lead men to live here in reference to another and better world. Reader, how art thou living?

2. *Fear not, little flock*—Though this refers solely to the apostles and first believers, of whom it was literally true, yet we may say that the number of genuine believers has been, and is still, small, in comparison of Heathens and false Christians.

3. *It is your Father's good pleasure*—Our Lord intimates, God has already given you that kingdom which consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and has undertaken to protect and save you to the uttermost; therefore, fear not; the smallness of your number cannot hurt you, for omnipotence itself has undertaken your cause.

4. *Sell that ye have*—Dispose of your goods. Be not like the foolish man already mentioned, who laid up the produce of his fields, without permitting the poor to partake of God's bounty: Turn the fruits of your fields (which are beyond what you need for your own support) into money, and give it in alms; and the treasure thus laid out shall be as laid up for yourselves and families in heaven. This "purse" shall not grow old, and this "treasure" shall not decay. Ye shall by and by find both the place where you laid up the treasure,

and the treasure itself in the place; for he who hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and he may rest assured, that whatever, for Christ's sake, he thus lays out, it will be paid him again.

5. *Where no thief approacheth*—"Covetous men are robbers and thieves: Retaining and claiming as their own, those things which God hath entrusted to their care. It is the bread of the hungry, which the covetous man detains: It is the garment of the naked, which he keeps locked up in his chest: It is the shoe of the barefooted, which he suffers to rot in uselessness; it is the money of the poor and afflicted, which he keeps laid up in store, and unemployed, but for himself."—ST. BASIL.

6. *Where your treasure is*—Men fix their hearts on their treasures, and often resort to the place where they have deposited them, to see that all is safe and secure. Let God be the treasure of your soul, and let your heart go frequently to the place where his honour dwelleth.

"Ye redeemed of the Lord, your minds must concentrate all their thoughts and affections upon the prepared abodes of futurity; you must put worldly ease and repose behind you, and renounce them for ever; you must place the wilderness before you, and follow the track that leads onward through its territories, trodden by those who now inherit the promises; and with unwearied step, and in an undeviating path, you must seek the 'rest which remaineth for the people of God.'"—J. PARSONS.

SECTION CXXXII.—WATCHFULNESS AND FIDELITY ENJOINED.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XII. 35—48.

LET your loins be girded¹ about, and *your* lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching:² Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.³ And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: For the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.⁴ And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*.⁵ For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

1. *Let your loins be girded*—Be active, diligent, determined, ready; let all hindrances be removed out of the way; and let the candle of the Lord be always found burning brightly in your hand.

2. *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching*—“Another source of danger is the world: The men of the world, and the example of the world; the maxims of the world, and

the spirit of the world; the business of the world, and the pleasures of the world; the world within the house, and the world without the house; the world in the shop, and the world in the parlour. Here your danger exceeds all the alarm that we can possibly give you. The world follows, and finds, and assails us every where. Every situation, every condition, hides innumerable temptations. How ensnaring are the allure-

ments of the world! They carry with them a species of fascination, in the highest degree seductive to the propensities of human nature. In how many have they had the unhappy influence of producing alienation of heart, and have become the cause of lukewarmness and apostasy!"—T. H. WALKER.

3. *And will come forth and serve them*—“This is one of the most extraordinary promises of the New Testament. The import of it is, that their Lord would not treat them in that heavenly state as even favoured servants; but as chosen guests, to whom he would show marks of peculiar love and honour. Christ will, in fact, serve his faithful servants for ever; as he ministers grace, so will he delight to minister the honours, the blessedness, and the rewards of his kingdom; and that with a condescension which shall stoop to the meanest and most unnoticed by the world, who have served him in any line of duty with zealous affection. He will select the most laborious, persevering, and watchful servants for singular honour.”—R. WATSON.

4. *With the unbelievers*—Persons who had the light and knowledge of God's word, but made an improper use of the privileges they received. The persons mentioned here differ widely from unbelievers or infidels, namely, those who were in a state of Heathenism, because they had not the revelation of the Most High: The latter knew not the will of God; and, though they acted against it, did not do it in obstinacy; the former knew that will, and daringly opposed it. They were unfaithful, and therefore heavily punished.

5. *Shall be beaten with few stripes*—From this and the preceding verse we find, that it is a crime to be ignorant of God's

will; because to every one God has given less or more of the means of instruction. Those who have had much light, or the opportunity of receiving much, and have not improved it to their own salvation, and the good of others, shall have punishment proportioned to the light they have abused. On the other hand, those who have had little light, and few means of improvement, shall have few stripes,—shall be punished only for the abuse of the knowledge they possessed. Many have thought, that their ignorance of divine things would be a sufficient excuse for their crimes; and, that they might have but few stripes, they voluntarily continued in ignorance. But such persons should know, that God will judge them for the knowledge they might have received, but refused to acquire. No criminal is excused because he has been ignorant of the laws of his country, and so transgressed them, when it can be proved that those very laws have been published throughout the land. Much knowledge is a dangerous thing if it be not improved; as this will greatly aggravate the condemnation of its possessor. Nor will it avail a person, in the land of light and information, to be ignorant, as he shall be judged for what he might have known; and, perhaps, in this case, the punishment of this voluntarily ignorant man will be even greater than that of the more enlightened; because his crimes are aggravated by this consideration, that he refused to have the light, that he might neither be obliged to walk in the light, nor account for the possession of it. So we find that the plea of ignorance is a mere refuge of lies, and none can plead it who has the book of God within his reach, and lives in a country blessed with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

SECTION CXXXIII.—PREPARATION FOR THE JUDGMENT.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XII. 49—59.

I AM come to send fire¹ on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism² to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? ³ Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye ⁴ not what is right? When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, Thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.⁵

1. *I am come to send fire*—From the connexion in which these words stand, both in this place and in Matthew, it appears as if our Lord intended by the word “fire,” not only the consuming influence of the Roman sword, but also the influence of his own Spirit in the destruction of sin. In both these senses this fire was already kindled; as yet, however, it appeared but as a spark, but was soon to break out into an all-consuming flame.

2. *But I have a baptism*—The fire, though already kindled, cannot burn up till after the Jews have put me to death; then the Roman sword shall come, and the Spirit of judgment, burning, and purification shall be poured out.

“He knew that every avenue from Beth-lehem conducted to Calvary; and that nothing would be effected until the altar was reared, and the victim was slain. He knew that there could be no honour if there were no death; and that there would be no triumph except the Captain of salvation were made perfect through sufferings; that it was from the cross that he was to rise to the crown; and that it was from the grave that he was to enter into the glory. The sense of the necessity under which his infinite tenderness for apostate man had placed him, and the prospect of ‘the joy set before him,’ were the causes which prompt-

ed him forward, and nerved him to ‘endure the cross, and to despise the shame.’ They straitened him until his baptism was accomplished. He was rendered eager for the strife of the battle, and was made to long for the garments rolled in blood. He traced and trod with unwavering step the course by which, through legions of foes, he was to seal the redemption, and ascend to the kingdom. When ‘the hour’ came he grappled with all its horrors, sustained all its trials, completed all its labours; and when it closed, he shouted in tidings that reverberated through the universe, ‘It is finished,’ and gave up the ghost!”—
J. PARSONS.

3. *But how is it that ye do not discern this time?*—Can ye not discover from the writings of the prophets, and from the events which now take place, that this is the time of the Messiah; and that I am the very person foretold by them?

4. *And why judge ye?*—Even without the express declarations of the prophets, ye might, from what ye see and hear yourselves, discern that God has now visited his people in such a manner as he never did before.

5. *Till thou hast paid the very last mite*—And when can this be, if we understand the text spiritually?—Can weeping, walling, and gnashing of teeth, pay to divine

justice the debt a sinner has contracted ? This is impossible. Let him who readeth understand.

“Sinner, awake ! The talents you have buried, and the opportunities you have lost, your earthly desires, and your unruly tempers, your ignorance of God, and your apathy about things of eternal moment, all testify against you, and prove that, ‘being weighed in the balances,’ you are ‘found wanting.’ Could you see with what rapidity time recedes, and eternity advances ; how much of your sands have run, and what a scanty portion remains ; how guilt accumulates upon your conscience, and how

your heart hardens under the influence of sin ; how the hopes of devils are raised, and how the fears of angels are excited, on your account ; your countenance would be changed, your thoughts would be troubled, your joints would be loosed, and your knees would smite one against another. Be admonished ; seize and improve the present moment ; let it terminate your career of disobedience ; let it bear upon its wing the tear of contrition, and the prayer of faith, as pledges of your future fidelity, and as the first-fruits of your godly alarm.”

—P. M'OWAN.

SECTION CXXXIV.—REPENTANCE ; THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIII. 1—9.

THERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things ? I tell you, Nay : But, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam¹ fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ? I tell you, Nay : But, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He spake also this parable ; A certain *man*² had a fig tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years³ I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none : Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?⁴ And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : And if it bear fruit, well : And if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

1. *The tower in Siloam*—“Do ye who live in Jerusalem, and who consider yourselves peculiarly attached to the law, and under the strongest obligations to obey it, do ye think that those Galileans were more heathenish than the rest of the Galileans, because they suffered such things ? No. It was not on this account that they perished : Both these cases exhibit a specimen of the manner in which ye shall all perish, if ye do not speedily repent, and turn to God.”

It is very wrong to suppose, that those who suffer by the sword, or by natural accidents, are the most culpable before God. An adequate punishment for sin cannot be inflicted in this world : What God does here, in this way, is in general : (1.) Through mercy, to alarm others ; (2.) To show his hatred to sin ; (3.) To preserve in men's minds a proper sense of his providence and justice ; and, (4.) To give sinners, in one or two particular instances, a general specimen of the punishment

that awaits all the perseveringly penitent.

2. *A certain man*—Many meanings are given to this parable, and divines may abound in them; the sense which our Lord designed to convey by it appears to be the following :—(1.) “A person,” God Almighty. (2.) “Had a fig-tree,” the Jewish church. (3.) “Planted in his vineyard,” established in the land of Judea. (4.) “He came seeking fruit;” he required that the Jewish people should walk in righteousness, in proportion to the spiritual culture he bestowed on them. (5.) The vine-dresser; the Lord Jesus, for God hath committed all judgment to the Son. (6.) “Cut it down;” let the Roman sword be unsheathed against it. (7.) “Let it alone;” Christ is represented as Intercessor for sinners, for whose sake the day of their probation is often lengthened; during which time he is constantly employed in doing every thing that has a tendency to promote their salvation. (8.) “Thou shalt cut it down;” a time will come, that those who have not turned at God’s invitations and reproofs shall be cut off, and numbered with the transgressors.

“It is every way gratifying to contemplate the eternal Jehovah, as the Father and Friend of his creatures; as the Being of pure benevolence; as the Fountain of mercy and compassion; as guarding the steps, supplying the wants, and alleviating the sorrows, of man; in a word, as clothed in all the attributes of gentleness, condescension, and love. But he who should regard the Divine Being in this light only, would show himself thoughtless, unreason-

able, or vicious. He would mutilate the system of truth, and dishonour the Judge of all.” —BROMLEY.

3. *Behold, these three years*—From this circumstance in the parable, it may be reasonably concluded that Jesus had been, at the time of saying this, exercising his ministry for three years past; and, from what is said of letting it alone this year also, it may be concluded likewise that this parable was spoken about a year before Christ’s crucifixion; and, if both these conclusions are reasonable, we may thence infer that this parable was not spoken at the time which appears to be assigned to it, and that the whole time of Christ’s public ministry was about four years.

4. *Why cumbereth it the ground?*—Or, in other words, “Why should the ground be also useless?” The tree itself brings forth no fruit; let it be cut down, that a more profitable one may be planted in its place.

“Final barrenness will lead to final ruin. When Jesus gives us up, we shall be cast out of the church; we shall be shut out of heaven; and we shall be cast into hell. And this day our honoured, but insulted, Saviour may give us up for ever. It will be of no use to plead that we have done no harm. The question is, Have we done any good? The fig-tree is cut down because it is barren; and we may perish for our unfruitfulness. May the means which our blessed Lord is now using to make us fruitful be continued! and may they be crowned with complete success, that God may be glorified in our eternal salvation!” —EDMONDSON.

SECTION CXXXV.—AN INFIRM WOMAN CURED.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIII. 10—22.

AND he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity¹ eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*. And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid *his* hands on her: And immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with

indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: In them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.*

1. *A woman which had a spirit of infirmity*—Relative to this subject three things may be considered.

I. The woman's infirmity.

II. Her cure. And,

III. The conduct of the ruler of the synagogue on the occasion.

I. THE WOMAN'S INFIRMITY.

(1.) What was its origin? Sin. Had this never entered into the world, there had not been either pain, distortion, or death.

(2.) Who was the agent in it? Satan. God has often permitted demons to act on and in the bodies of men and women; and it is not improbable that the principal part of unaccountable and inexplicable disorders still come from the same source.

(3.) What was the nature of this infirmity? She was "bowed together," bent down to the earth, a situation equally painful and humiliating; the violence of which she could not support, and the shame of which she could not conceal.

(4.) What was the duration of this infirmity? Eighteen years. A long time to be under the constant and peculiar influence of the devil.

(5.) What was the effect of this infirmity? The woman was so bowed together, that she "could in no case stand straight," or look toward heaven.

II. THE WOMAN'S CURE.

(1.) "Jesus saw her"—Notwithstanding her infirmity was great, painful, and shameful, she took care to attend the synagogue. While she hoped for help from God, she saw it was her duty to wait in the appointed way, in order to receive it. Jesus saw her distress, and the desire she had both to worship her Maker and to get her health restored; and his eye affected his heart.

(2.) "He called her to him"—Her heart and her distress spoke loudly, though her lips were silent; and, as she was thus calling for help, Jesus calls her to himself, that she may receive help.

(3.) Jesus "laid his hands on her"—The hand of his holiness terrifies, and the hand of his power expels, the demon. Ordinances, however excellent, will be of no avail to a sinner, unless he apprehend Christ in them.

(4.) "Immediately she was made straight"—This cure was, (i.) A speedy one: It was done in an instant. (ii.) It was

a perfect one: She was made completely whole. (iii.) It was a public one: There were many to attest and render it credible. (iv.) It was a stable and permanent one: She was loosed, for ever loosed, from her infirmity. (v.) Her soul partook of the good done to her body: She glorified God. As she knew before that it was satan who had bound her, she knew also that it was God only that could loose her; and now, feeling that she is loosed, she gives God that honour which is due to his name.

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE OCCASION.

(1.) He "answered with indignation"—It would seem as if the demon who had left the woman's body had got into his heart. It is not an unfrequent case to find a person filled with rage and madness, while beholding the effects of Christ's power upon others. Perhaps, like this ruler, he pretends zeal and concern for the honour of religion: "These preachings, prayer-meetings, convictions, conversions, &c., are not carried on in his way, and therefore they cannot be of God." Let such take care, lest, while denying the operation of God's hand, they be given up to demonic influence.

(2.) He endeavours to prevent others from receiving the kind help of the blessed Jesus: He "said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work." Men

of this character, who have extensive influence over the poor, &c., do immense harm: They often hinder them from hearing that word which is able to save their souls. But for this also they must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Reader, hast thou ever acted in this way?

(3.) Jesus retorts his condemnation with peculiar force: "Thou hypocrite;" to pretend zeal for God's glory, when it is only the workings of thy malicious, unfeeling, and uncharitable heart. Wouldst thou not even take thy ass to water upon the sabbath-day? And wouldst thou deprive a daughter of Abraham, one of thy own nation and religion, of the mercy and goodness of God upon the sabbath? Was not the sabbath instituted for the benefit of man?

(4.) "His adversaries were ashamed:" The mask of their hypocrisy, the only covering they had, is taken away; and now they are exposed to the just censure of that multitude whom they deceived, and from whom they expected continual applause.

(5.) His indignation and uncharitable censure, not only turn to his own confusion, but are made the instruments of the edification of the multitude: They "rejoiced at all the glorious things which he did." Thus, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder thereof thou shalt restrain.

SECTION CXXXVI.—CHRIST LAMENTS OVER JERUSALEM. 3

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIII. 23—35.

THEN said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? ¹ And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: For many, I say unto you, will seek ² to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: For Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox,³ Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow,⁴ and the third *day* I shall be perfected.⁵ Nevertheless I must walk⁶ to day, and to morrow, and the *day* following: For it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate:⁷ And verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

1. *Are there few that be saved?*—A question either of impertinence or curiosity, the answer to which can profit no man. The grand question is, “Can I be saved?” Yes, “How?” “Strive earnestly to enter in through the strait gate.” Agonize; exert every power of body and soul; let your salvation be the grand business of your whole life.

2. *Many will seek*—They “seek;” wish and desire; but they do not strive: Therefore, because they will not agonize—will not be in earnest—they shall not get in.

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it.’ And what is the reason of this? Have only a few been redeemed? Nay, but ‘he gave himself a ransom for all.’ Are but a few called? Nay, the declaration is, ‘Many are called.’ ‘Wisdom crieth aloud; she uttereth her voice in the streets.’ The reason is found where our Lord himself places it: ‘Ye will not come unto me.’ Many will not even listen to the truth. Of these who hear, many will not lay it to heart. Many think without resolving; many resolve without executing; many begin to execute, who do not endure to the end.”—R. WATSON.

3. *Tell that fox*—Herod was a very

vicious prince, and lived in public incest with his sister-in-law: If our Lord meant him here, it is hard to say why the character of “fox,” which implies cunning, design, and artifice, to hide evil intentions, should be attributed to him, who never seemed studious to conceal his vices. But we may suppose that Christ, who knew his heart, saw that he covered his desire for the destruction of our Lord, under the pretence of zeal for the law and welfare of the Jewish people. A fox among the Jews appears to have been the emblem of a wicked ruler, who united cunning with cruelty, and was always plotting how he might aggrandize himself by spoiling the people.

4. *To day and to morrow*—I am to work miracles for two days more, and on the third day I shall be put to death. But it is probable that this phrase only means, that he had but a short time to live, without specifying its duration.

5. *Perfected*—Or “finished.” I shall then have accomplished the purpose for which I came into the world, leaving nothing undone which the counsel of God designed me to complete. Hence, in reference to our Lord, the word implies his dying; as the plan of human redemption was not finished, till he bowed his head

and gave up the ghost on the cross : See John xix. 30, where the same word is used.

6. *I must walk, &c.*—I must continue to work miracles and teach for a short time yet, and then I shall die in Jerusalem : Therefore I cannot depart, according to the advice given me ; nor can a hair of my head fall to the ground till my work be all done.

7. *Your house is left unto you desolate*—“ Have not some of you, to whom has been given, in clear and in affecting manner, the statement of the truth of God, yet gone forward in life in the continued practical rejection of it ? You have been warned and invited ; you have heard the terrors and the mercies of the Lord ; you have been met both by argument and appeal ; and still you preserve unbroken the enmity of your hearts, and continue unchecked the transgressions of your lives. Perhaps you have had pious parents and friends, who have pressed upon you the

oracles of heaven, with all the power that tenderness and authority could employ ; and perhaps you have been placed amidst scenes of providential dispensation, whose occurrences were as the loudest calls to the repentance without which you must perish ; but you are unchanged and unmoved still ! No gullt can be so daring as this ; no aggravation can be so weighty as this : They whose sins assume such an order of perpetration, stand forth in the very front of the hosts of evil, unparalleled in the enormity of their rebellion. We conjure to a solemn consideration ; we entreat for full acknowledgment, and penitent return ; we would have it, that, without delay, all should utter the cry, ‘ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ’ lest the opportunities of grace should pass away for ever, and lest there should be presented before the appalled and ruined spirit, the emblems of justice, and the condemnation of despair ! ”
—J. PARSONS.

SECTION CXXXVII.—CHRIST DINES WITH A PHARISEE.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIV. 1—14.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day,¹ that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.² And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day ? And they held their peace.³ And he took *him*, and healed him, and let him go ; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day ? And they could not answer him again to these things. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms ;⁴ saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room ; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him ; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room ; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher : Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be

abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends,⁵ nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee:⁶ For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

1. *To eat bread on the sabbath day*—

“But why is it that there should be an invitation or dinner given on the sabbath day?”

Answer: The Jews purchased and prepared the best viands they could procure for the sabbath day, in order to do it honour. As the sabbath is intended for the benefit both of the body and soul of man, it should not be a day of austerity or fasting, especially among the labouring poor. The most wholesome and nutritive food should be then procured, if possible; that both body and soul may feel the influence of this divine appointment, and give God the glory of his grace. On this blessed day, let every man eat his bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. In doing this, surely there is no reason that a man should feed himself without fear. If the sabbath be a festival, let it be observed unto the Lord; and let no unnecessary acts be done; and avoid that bane of religious solemnity, giving and receiving visits on the Lord's day. The conduct of this Pharisee was most execrable. Professing friendship and affection, he invited our blessed Lord to his table, merely that he might have a more favourable opportunity of watching his conduct, that he might accuse him, and take away his life. In eating and drinking, people feel generally less restraint than at other times, and are apt to converse more freely. The man who can take such an advantage over one of his own guests must have a baseness of soul, and a fellness of malice, of which, we would have thought, for the honour of human nature, that devils alone were capable. Among the Turks, if a man only taste salt with another, he holds himself bound, in the most solemn manner, never to do that person any injury.

2. *The dropsy*—Probably the insidious Pharisee had brought this dropsical man to the place, not doubting that our Lord's eye

would affect his heart, and that he would instantly cure him; and then he could most plausibly accuse him for a breach of the sabbath. If this were the case, and it is likely, how deep must have been the perfidy and malice of the Pharisee!

3. *They held their peace*—They could not answer the question but in the affirmative; and as they were determined to accuse him if he did heal the man, they could not give an answer but such as would condemn themselves, and therefore they were silent.

4. *They chose out the chief rooms*—When custom and law have regulated and settled places in public assemblies, a man who is obliged to attend may take the place which belongs to him, without injury to himself or to others: When nothing of this nature is settled, the law of humility, and the love of order, are the only judges of what is proper. To take the highest place when it is not our due is public vanity: Obstinate to refuse it when offered is another instance of the same vice, though private and concealed. Humility takes as much care to avoid the ostentation of an affected refusal, as the open seeking of a superior place.

“Humility is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: ‘Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ Religion, and that alone, teaches absolute humility, by which I mean a sense of our absolute nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other, is often an unwelcome sentiment, forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it; that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man

loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour. In so august a presence, he sees all distinctions lost, all beings reduced to the same level; he can look at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt; and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the convictions of superiority which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy importunate passion of the heart."—ROBERT HALL.

5. *Call not thy friends, &c.*—Our Lord

certainly does not mean, that a man should not entertain, at particular times, his friends, &c.; but what he inculcates here is charity to the poor; and what he condemns is those entertainments which are given to the rich, either to flatter them, or to procure a similar return; because the money that is thus criminally laid out, properly belongs to the poor.

6. *For they cannot recompense thee*—Because you have done it for God's sake only, and they cannot make you a recompence, therefore God will consider himself your debtor, and will recompense you in the resurrection of the righteous.

SECTION CXXXVIII.—THE GREAT SUPPER.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XIV. 15—24.

AND when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant¹ at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.² And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in,³ that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

1. *Sent his servant*—Messengers are sent to invite the guests to a Hindoo feast; when not only relations, but all persons of the same division of caste in the neighbourhood, are invited. A refusal to attend is considered as a great affront.

2. *And yet there is room*—On some occasions, so numerous are the guests, that

there is not room for them to sit in the court of the person who makes the feast, and a larger is therefore borrowed.

3. *Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in*—"Prevail on them by the most earnest entreaties." No other kind of constraint is ever recommended in the gospel of Christ; every other

kind of compulsion is anti-Christian, can only be submitted to by cowards and knaves, and can produce nothing but hypocrites.

“No human power can invade the impenetrable recesses of the human heart. Force can never convince men, it can only make hypocrites.”—FENELON.

From this we may learn, that the church which tolerates, encourages, and practises persecution, under the pretence of concern for the purity of the faith, and zeal for God's glory, is not the church of Christ; and that no man can be of such a church without endangering his salvation. Let it ever be the glory of the Protestant church, and especially of the Church of England, that it discountenances and abhors all persecution on a religious account, and that it has diffused the same benign temper through that state with which it is associated.

“The invitation is full and free. God is the Lord of the banquet. He alone could make such a provision, large enough to comprise all who are willing to partake of it; and offered without money and without price, graciously furnished from the inex-

haustible stores of his liberality. Look at this provision in the wisdom of its design, the accomplishment of its preparation, and the benevolence of its invitation; look at the gospel in the sublimity of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, the grandeur of its conceptions, the character of its influence, the perpetuity of its existence, the universality of its application; and then determine whether it is not the provision of the Deity for his guilty and ruined creatures. Many of those who refuse, excuse themselves on the plea of their farm and merchandize, their worldly occupations. How mean is this! They sin with an obstinate heart; yet dare not do it with an high hand. How frivolous is this! for what competition can possibly exist in reality between what they refuse and what they pursue? How false is this! for religious and worldly duties are by no means irreconcilable or incompatible. How insulting is this! for they ought to have left all at his word, and to have followed him without hesitation, or reluctance, or stipulation.”—W. B. COLLYER.

SECTION CXXXIX.—THE TERMS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLESHIP.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XIV. 25—35.

AND there went great multitudes with him: And he turned, and said unto them, If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother,¹ and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross,² and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower,³ sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king,⁴ sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all⁵ that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good. But

if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; *but* men cast it out.⁶ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

1. *And hate not his father, and mother, &c.*—Matthew expresses the true meaning of this word when he says, "He who loveth his father and mother more than me." When we read, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," the meaning is simply, I have loved Jacob (the Israelites) more than Esau (the Edomites); and that this is no arbitrary interpretation of the word "hate," but one agreeable to the Hebrew idiom, appears from what is said on Gen. xxix. 30, 31, where Leah's being hated, is explained by Rachel's being loved more than Leah.

2. *Whosoever doth not bear his cross*— "This solemn proclamation of the Author of our religion, is still as applicable as when he uttered it. Some of us have to abandon the prospects of advantage as to property, and shut out the means of acquiring honour and wealth; some of us have to relinquish all that pertains to the ease of existence, and live on a perpetual stretch of exertion to fulfil that duty which the Christian character, with its corresponding opportunities, imposes; some of us have to run counter to our friends, to disappoint their wishes, and even to disobey their commands; and we are not without instances in which brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers have risen in the guilt of family persecution, because one among them would perform the dictates of conscience, and engage in His service whose voice had been heard, saying, 'Follow me.'"—J. PARSONS.

3. *To build a tower*—Probably this means no more than a dwelling-house, on the top of which, according to the Asiatic manner, battlements were built, both to take the fresh air on, and to serve for refuge from, and defence against, an enemy; it was also used for prayer and meditation.

This parable represents the absurdity of those who undertook to be disciples of Christ, without considering what difficulties they were to meet with, and what strength they had to enable them to go through with the undertaking. He that

will be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, shall require no less than the mighty power of God to support him; as both hell and earth will unite to destroy him.

4. *Or what king, going to make war*— "The features of each of these images display some important truths. In the 'tower,' a character is to be built up, for which materials must be prepared; and we must derive these materials from God. This character must be consistent, otherwise the beauty of the building and its preparations are lost; must be progressive, advancing according to the magnificent design, and from day to day; must be strong, as well as beautiful, fitting as a palace for the Deity, and able to bear the siege of its adversaries. In the 'war,' a great disproportion is stated between the contending powers: And, in truth, there was no comparison between the numbers and natural talents of the apostles, and the mighty prejudices, the incalculable multitudes, the secular powers, and the philosophical antagonists, with whom they had to contend. Nor are the resources of the Christian, of an external or personal kind, at all equal to his duties, or commensurate with the strength and wiles of his adversaries. It is most evident that Jesus intended to show them, that the warfare which they undertook could not be supported at their own charge, nor be successful in their own energy."—W. B. COLLYER.

5. *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all*—This seems to be addressed particularly to those who were then, and who were to be, preachers of his gospel; and who were to travel over all countries, publishing salvation to a lost world.

6. *Men cast it out*—"Christian qualities alone are to be prized; and a profession without them is utterly worthless. Those who make it are injurious to society, in proportion as they impose upon them a 'form of godliness without its power;' and will be finally rejected when the Redeemer shall distinguish between hypocrites and his faithful followers."—W. B. COLLYER.

SECTION CXL.—THE LOST SHEEP; THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XV. 1—10.

THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners,¹ and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you,² having an hundred sheep,³ if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.⁴ Either what woman having ten pieces of silver,⁵ if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*? And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.⁶

1. *Receiveth sinners*—He receives them cordially, affectionately; takes them to “his bosom;” for so the word implies. What mercy! Jesus receives sinners in the most loving, affectionate manner, and saves them unto eternal life! Reader, give glory to God for ever!

2. *What man of you*—Our Lord spoke this and the following parable to justify his conduct in receiving and conversing with sinners or Heathens.

3. *An hundred sheep*—Parables similar to this are frequent among the Jewish writers. The whole flock of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, belongs unto this divine Shepherd; and it is but reasonable to expect, that the gracious Proprietor will look after those who have gone astray, and bring them back to the flock. The lost sheep is an emblem of a heedless, thoughtless sinner: One who follows the corrupt dictates of his own heart, without ever reflecting upon his conduct, or considering what will be the issue of his unholy course of life. No creature

strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: It will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction to the place where the flock is: This I have often noticed. No creature is more defenceless than a sheep, and more exposed to be devoured by dogs and wild beasts. Even the fowls of the air seek their destruction. I have known ravens often attempt to destroy lambs, by picking out their eyes, in which, when they have succeeded, as the creature does not see whither it is going, it soon falls an easy prey to its destroyer. Satan is ever going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; in order to succeed, he blinds the understanding of sinners, and then finds it an easy matter to tumble them into the pit of perdition. Who but a Pharisee or a devil would find fault with the Shepherd who endeavours to rescue his sheep from so much danger and ruin?

4. *Just persons, which need no repentance*—Who do not require such a change of mind and purpose as these do; who are not so profligate, and cannot repent of sins they have never committed. Distinctions of this kind frequently occur in the Jewish writings. There are many persons who have been brought up in a sober and regular course of life, attending the ordinances of God, and being true and just in all their dealings; these most materially differ from the Heathens mentioned, verse 1, because they believe in God, and attend the means of grace; they differ also essentially from the tax-gatherers mentioned in the same place, because they wrong no man, and are upright in their dealings. Therefore they cannot repent of the sins of a Heathen, which they have not practised; nor of the rapine of a tax-gatherer, of which they have never been guilty. As, therefore, these just persons are put in opposition to the tax-gatherers and Heathens, we may at once see the scope and design of our Lord's words. These needed no repentance in comparison of the others, as not being guilty of their crimes. And as these belonged, by outward profession at least, to the flock of God, and were sincere and upright according to their light, they are considered as being in no danger of being lost; and as they fear God and work righteousness according to their light, he will take care to make those farther discoveries to them, of the purity of his nature, the holiness of his law, and the necessity of the atonement, which he sees to be necessary. See the case of Cornelius. On this ground, the owner is represented as feeling more joy in consequence of finding one sheep that was lost, there having been almost no hope of its recovery, than he feels at seeing ninety and nine still safe under his care. "Men generally rejoice more over a small unexpected advantage, than over a much greater good to which they have been accustomed." There are some, and their opinion need not be hastily rejected, who imagine, that, by the "ninety and nine just persons," our Lord means the "angels;" that they are in proportion to men, as

ninety-nine are to one, and that the Lord takes more pleasure in the return and salvation of one sinner, than in the uninterrupted obedience of ninety-nine holy angels; and that it was through his superior love to fallen man that he took upon him his nature, and not the nature of angels.

5. *What woman having ten pieces of silver*—The "drachma" that was lost is also a very expressive emblem of a sinner who is estranged from God, and enslaved to habits of iniquity. The longer a piece of money is lost, the less probability is there of its being again found; as it may not only lose its colour, and not be easily observed, but will continue to be more and more covered with dust and dirt; or its value may be vastly lessened by being so trampled on, that a part of the substance, together with the image and superscription, may be worn off. So the sinner sinks deeper and deeper into the impurities of sin, loses even his character among men, and gets the image and superscription of his Maker defaced from his heart. He who wishes to find the image of God, which he has lost by sin, must attend to that word which will be a lantern to his steps, and receive that Spirit which is a light to the soul, to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He must "sweep the house;" put away the evil of his doings; and "seek diligently;" use every mean of grace, and cry incessantly to God, till he restore to him the light of his countenance.

6. *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*—"The sum is, as a father peculiarly rejoices when an extravagant child, supposed to be utterly lost, comes to a thorough sense of his duty; or, as any other person, who has recovered what he had given up for gone, has a more sensible satisfaction in it, than in several other things equally valuable, but not in such danger; so do the angels in heaven peculiarly rejoice in the conversion of the most abandoned sinners. Yea, God himself so readily forgives and receives them, that he may be represented as having part in the joy."—WESLEY.

SECTION CXLI.—THE PRODIGAL SON.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XV. 11—32.

AND he said, A certain man had two sons : And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them *his* living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ;¹ and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.² And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : And no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself,³ he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet : And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it* ; and let us eat, and be merry : For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son⁴ was in the field : And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,⁵ and would not go in : Therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : But as soon as this thy son⁶ was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : For this thy brother⁷ was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

1. *A mighty famine in that land* As he was of a profligate turn of mind himself, it is likely he sought out a place where riot and excess were the ruling characteristics of the inhabitants; and, as poverty is the sure consequence of prodigality, it is no wonder that famine preyed on the whole country.

2. *To feed swine*—The basest and vilest of all employments; and, to a Jew, peculiarly degrading. Shame, contempt, and distress are wedded to sin, and can never be divorced. No character could be meaner in the sight of a Jew than that of a swine-herd.

3. *When he came to himself*—A state of sin is represented in the sacred writings as a course of folly and madness; and repentance is represented as a restoration to sound sense. The design of the inspired penman is, to show, not merely the depth of the profligate son's repentance, and the sincerity of his conversion, but to show the great affection of the father, and his readiness to forgive his disobedient son. His tenderness of heart cannot wait till the son has made his confession; his bowels yearn over him, and he cuts short his tale of contrition and self-reproach, by giving him the most plenary assurances of his pardoning love.

4. *His elder son*—Meaning probably persons of a regular moral life, who needed no repentance in comparison of the prodigal already described.

5. *He was angry*—This refers to the indignation of the scribes and Pharisees. In every point of view, the anger of the old son was improper and unreasonable.

6. *This thy son*—"This son of thine;" words expressive of supreme contempt. "This son:" He would not condescend to call him by his name, or to acknowledge him for his brother; and, at the same time, bitterly reproaches his amiable father for his affectionate tenderness, and readiness to receive his once undutiful, but now penitent, child!

7. *This thy brother*—Or, "This brother of thine." To awaken this ill-natured, angry, inhumane man to a proper sense of his duty, both to his parent and brother, this amiable father returns him his own unkind words, but in a widely different spirit. "This son of mine to whom I show

mercy is thy brother, to whom thou shouldst show bowels of tenderness and affection; especially as he is no longer the person he was: He was dead in sin; he is quickened by the power of God: He was lost to thee, to me, to himself, and to our God; but now he is found; and he will be a comfort to me, a help to thee, and a standing proof, to the honour of the Most High, that God receiveth sinners." This, as well as the two preceding parables, was designed to vindicate the conduct of our blessed Lord in receiving tax-gatherers and Heathens; and as the Jews, to whom it was addressed, could not but approve of the conduct of this benevolent father, and reprobate that of his elder son, so they could not but justify the conduct of Christ towards those outcasts of men, and, at least in the silence of their hearts, pass sentence of condemnation upon themselves. For the sublime, the beautiful, the pathetic, and the instructive, the history of Joseph in the Old Testament, and the parable of the prodigal son in the New, have no parallels either in sacred or profane history.

"We have in this parable a lively emblem of the condition and behaviour of sinners in their natural state. Thus, when enriched by the bounty of the great common Father, do they ungratefully run from him. Sensual pleasures are eagerly pursued, till they have squandered away all the grace of God. And while these continue, not a serious thought of God can find a place in their minds. And even when afflictions come upon them, still they will make hard shifts, before they will let the grace of God, concurring with his providence, persuade them to think of a return.

"When they see themselves naked, indigent, and undone, then they recover the exercise of their reason. Then they remember the blessings they have thrown away, and attend to the misery they have incurred. And hereupon they resolve to return to their Father, and put the resolution immediately in practice.

"Behold, with wonder and pleasure, the gracious reception they find, from divine injured goodness! When such a prodigal comes to his Father, he sees him afar off: He pities, meets, embraces him, and interrupts his acknowledgments with the tokens of his returning favour. He arrays him

with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, with inward and outward holiness, adorns him with all his sanctifying graces, and honours him with the tokens of his adopting love. And all this he does with unutterable delight, in that he who was lost is now found. Let no elder brother mur-

mur at this indulgence, but rather welcome the prodigal back into the family. And let those who have been thus received wander no more, but emulate the strictest piety of those who for many years have served their heavenly Father, and not transgressed his commandments."—WESLEY.

SECTION CXLII.—THE UNJUST STEWARD.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XVI. 1—18.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig;¹ to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended² the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: For the children of this world³ are in their generation wiser than the children of light.⁴ And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness:⁵ That, when ye fail, they may receive you⁶ into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least⁷ is faithful also in much: And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's,⁸ who shall give you that which is your own?⁹ No servant can serve two masters:¹⁰ For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: And they derided him.¹¹ And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves¹² before men; but God knoweth your hearts: For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the

sight of God. The law and the prophets *were* until John :¹³ Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : And whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

1. *I cannot dig*—He could not submit to become a common day-labourer, which was both a severe and base employment : “To beg I am ashamed.” And as these were the only honest ways left him to procure a morsel of bread, and he would not submit to either, he found he must continue the system of knavery, in order to provide for his idleness and luxury, or else starve. Woe to the man who gets his bread in this way ! The curse of the Lord must be on his head, and on his heart ; in his basket, and in his store.

2. *The lord commended*—Namely, the master of this unjust steward. He spoke highly of the address and cunning of his iniquitous servant. He had, on his own principles, made a very prudent provision for his support ; but his master no more approved of his conduct in this, than he did in his wasting his substance before. From the ambiguous and improper manner in which this is expressed in the common English translation, it has been supposed that our blessed Lord commended the conduct of this wicked man. But the word there translated “lord,” simply means the master of the unjust steward.

3. *The children of this world*—Such as mind worldly things only, without regarding God or their souls ; a phrase by which the Jews always designate the Gentiles.

4. *Children of light*—Such as are illuminated by the Spirit of God, and regard worldly things only as far as they may subserve the great purposes of their salvation, and become the instruments of good to others. But ordinarily the former evidence more carefulness and prudence, in providing for the support and comfort of this life, than the latter do in providing for another world.

5. *The mammon of unrighteousness*—Riches promise much, and perform nothing ; they excite hope and confidence, and deceive both : In making a man depend on them for happiness, they rob him of the

salvation of God and of eternal glory. For these reasons, they are represented as unjust and deceitful. To insinuate that, if a man have acquired riches by unjust means, he is to sanctify them, and provide himself a passport to the kingdom of God, by giving them to the poor, is a most horrid and blasphemous perversion of our Lord’s words. Ill-gotten gain must be restored to the proper owners ; if they are dead, then to their successors.

6. *They may receive you*—That is, say some, the angels : Others, The poor whom ye have relieved will welcome you into glory. It does not appear that the poor are meant : (1.) Because those who have relieved them may die a long time before them ; and therefore they could not be in heaven to receive them on their arrival. (2.) Many poor persons may be relieved, who will live and die in their sins, and consequently never enter into heaven themselves. The expression seems to be a mere Hebraism :—“They may receive you,” for, “Ye shall be received ;” that is, God shall admit you, if you make a faithful use of his gifts and graces. He who does not make a faithful use of what he has received from his Maker, has no reason to hope for eternal felicity.

7. *He that is faithful in that which is least, &c.*—He who has the genuine principles of fidelity in him will make a point of conscience of carefully attending to even the smallest things ; and it is by habituating himself to act uprightly in little things that he acquires the gracious habit of acting with propriety, fidelity, honour, and conscience, in matters of the greatest concern. On the contrary, he who does not act uprightly in small matters will seldom feel himself bound to pay much attention to the dictates of honour and conscience, in cases of high importance. Can we reasonably expect that a man who is continually falling by little things has power to resist temptations to great evils ?

8. *That which is another man's*—Or rather, “another’s;” that is, worldly riches, called another’s: (1.) Because they belong to God, and he has not designed that they should be any man’s portion. (2.) Because they are continually changing their possessors, being in the way of commerce, and in providence going from one to another.

9. *That which is your own*—Grace and glory, which God has particularly designed for you; which are the only proper satisfying portion for the soul; and which no man can enjoy in their plenitude, unless he be faithful to the first small motions and influences of the divine Spirit.

10. *No servant can serve two masters*—The heart will be either wholly taken up with God, or wholly engrossed with the world.

11. *They derided him*—And why? Because they were lovers of money; and he showed them that all such were in danger of perdition. As they were wedded to this life, and not concerned for the other, they considered him one of the most absurd and foolish of men, and worthy only of the most sovereign contempt, because he taught that spiritual and eternal things should be preferred before the riches of the universe. And how many thousands are there of the very same sentiment to the present day!

12. *Ye justify yourselves*—“Ye declare yourselves to be just.” Ye endeavour to make it appear to men, that ye can still feel an insatiable thirst after the present world, and yet secure the blessings of another; that ye can reconcile God and mammon, and serve two masters with equal zeal and affection; but God knoweth your hearts, and he knoweth that ye are alive to the world, and dead to God and goodness. Therefore, howsoever ye may be esteemed among men, ye are an abomination before him.

13. *The law and the prophets were until John*—The law and the prophets continued to be the sole teachers till John came, who first began to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: And now, he who wishes to be made a partaker of the blessings of that kingdom must rush speedily into it; as there will be but a short time before an utter destruction shall

fall upon this ungodly race. They who wish to be saved must imitate those who take a city by storm; rush into it, without delay, as the Romans are about to do into Jerusalem.

To make the parable of the “unjust steward” still more profitable, let every man consider:—(1.) That God is his Master, and the Author of all the good he enjoys, whether it be spiritual or temporal. (2.) That every man is only a steward, not a proprietor of those things. (3.) That all must give an account to God, how they have used or abused the blessings with which they have been entrusted. (4.) That the goods which God has entrusted to our care are goods of body and soul; goods of nature and grace; of birth and education: His word, Spirit, and ordinances: Goods of life, health, genius, strength, dignity, riches; and even poverty itself is often a blessing from the hand of God. (5.) That all these may be improved to God’s honour, our good, and our neighbour’s edification and comfort. (6.) That the time is coming, in which we shall be called to an account before God, concerning the use we have made of the good things with which he has entrusted us. (7.) That we may, even now, be accused before our Maker, of the awful crime of wasting our Lord’s substance. (8.) That if this crime can be proved against us, we are in immediate danger of being deprived of all the blessings which we have thus abused, and of being separated from God and the glory of his power for ever. (9.) That on hearing of the danger to which we are exposed, though we cannot dig to purchase salvation, yet we must beg, incessantly beg, at the throne of grace for mercy to pardon all that is past. (10.) That not a moment is to be lost: The arrest of death may have gone out against us; and this very night, hour, minute, our souls may be required of us. Let us therefore learn wisdom from the prudent dispatch which a worldly-minded man would use to retrieve his ruinous circumstances; and watch and pray, and use the little spark of the divine light which yet remains, but which is ready to die, that we may escape the gulf of perdition, and obtain some humble place in the heaven of glory. Our wants are pressing; God calls loudly! and eternity is at hand!

SECTION CXLIII.—THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XVI. 19—31.

THERE was a certain rich man,¹ which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: So that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: But if one went unto them from the dead,² they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses³ and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

1. *There was a certain rich man*—This account of the "rich man" and "Lazarus" is either a parable or a real history. If it be a parable, it is what may be: If it be a history, it is that which has been. Either a man may live as is here described, and go to perdition when he dies; or, some have lived in this way, and are now suffering the torments of an eternal fire. The account is equally instructive in which soever of these lights it is viewed. Let us carefully observe all the circumstances offered here to our notice, and we shall see, I. The crime of this man; and, II. His punishment.

I. HIS CRIME.

(1.) "There was a certain rich man"

in Jerusalem. Provided this be a real history, there is no doubt our Lord could have mentioned his name; but, as this might have given great offence, he chose to suppress it. His being rich is, in Christ's account, the first part of his sin. To this circumstance our Lord adds nothing: He does not say that he was born to a large estate; or that he acquired one by improper methods; or that he was haughty or insolent in the possession of it. Yet here is the first degree of his reprobation; he got all he could, and kept all to himself.

(2.) He "was clothed in purple and fine linen." Purple was a very precious and costly stuff; but our Lord does not say that in the use of it he exceeded

the bounds of his income, nor of his rank in life; nor is it said that he used his superb dress to be an agent to his crimes, by corrupting the hearts of others. Yet our Lord lays this down as a second cause of his perdition.

(3.) He "fared sumptuously every day." Now, let it be observed, that the law of Moses, under which this man lived, forbade nothing on this point, but excess in eating and drinking; indeed, it seems as if a person was authorized to taste the sweets of an abundance, which that law promised as a reward of fidelity. Besides, this rich man is not accused of having eaten food which was prohibited by the law, or of having neglected the abstinences and fasts prescribed by it. It is true, he is said to have "feasted sumptuously every day;" but our Lord does not intimate that this was carried to excess, or that it ministered to debauch. He is not accused of licentious discourse, of gaming, of frequenting any thing like our modern plays, balls, masquerades, or other impure and unholy assemblies; of speaking an irreverent word against divine revelation, or the ordinances of God. In a word, his probity is not attacked, nor is he accused of any of those crimes which pervert the soul or injure civil society. As Christ has described this man, does he appear culpable? What are his crimes? Why, (i.) He was rich. (ii.) He was finely clothed. And, (iii.) He feasted well. No other evil is spoken of him. In comparison of thousands, he was not only blameless, but he was a virtuous man.

(4.) But it is intimated by many that "he was an uncharitable, hard-hearted, unfeeling wretch." Yet of this there is not a word spoken by Christ. Let us consider all the circumstances, and we shall see that our blessed Lord has not represented this man as a monster of inhumanity; but merely as an indolent man, who sought and had his portion in this life, and was not at all concerned about another.

Therefore, we do not find, that when Abraham addressed him on the cause of his reprobation, he reproached him with hard-heartedness, saying, "Lazarus was hungry, and thou gavest him no meat; he was thirsty, and thou gavest him no

drink," &c.; but he said simply, "Son, remember that thou didst receive thy good things in thy life-time." "Thou hast sought thy consolation upon the earth, thou hast borne no cross, mortified no desire of the flesh, received not the salvation God had provided for thee; thou didst not belong to the people of God upon earth, and thou canst not dwell with them in glory."

There are few who consider, that it is a crime for those called Christians to live without Christ, when their lives are not stained with transgression. If Christianity only required men to live without gross outward sin, Paganism could furnish us with many bright examples of this sort. But the religion of Christ requires a conformity, not only in a man's conduct, to the principles of the gospel; but also a conformity in his heart to the spirit and mind of Christ.

"There was a certain beggar named Lazarus." His name is mentioned, because his character was good, and his end glorious; and because it is the purpose of God that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

We may now observe,

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE RICH MAN.

(1.) Lazarus dies, and is carried into Abraham's bosom. "Abraham's bosom" was a phrase used among the Jews, to signify the paradise of God.

"The rich man also died, and was buried." There is no mention of this latter circumstance in the case of Lazarus; he "was buried," no doubt; necessity required this: But he had the burial of a pauper, while the pomp and pride of the other followed him to the tomb. But let us view the circumstances of this man's punishment.

Scarcely had he entered the place of his punishment, when he lifted up his eyes on high; and what must his surprise be, to see himself separated from God, and to feel himself tormented in that flame! Neither himself, nor friends, ever suspected that the way in which he walked could have led to such a perdition.

"And seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." He sees Lazarus

clothed with glory and immortality; this is the first circumstance in his punishment. What a contrast! What a desire does he feel to resemble him, and what rage and despair because he is not like him! We may safely conclude, that the view which damned souls have, in the gulf of perdition, of the happiness of the blessed, and the conviction that they themselves might have eternally enjoyed this felicity, from which, through their own fault, they are eternally excluded, will form no mean part of the punishment of the lost.

(2.) The presence of a good to which they never had any right, and of which they are now deprived, affects the miserable less than the presence of that to which they had a right, and of which they are now deprived. Even in hell, a damned spirit must abhor the evil by which he is tormented, and desire that good that would free him from his torment. If a lost soul could be reconciled to its torment, and to its situation, then, of course, its punishment must cease to be such. An eternal desire to escape from evil, and an eternal desire to be united with the supreme good, the gratification of which is for ever impossible, must make a second circumstance in the misery of the lost.

(3.) "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things." The remembrance of the good things possessed in life, and now to be enjoyed no more for ever, together with the remembrance of grace offered or abused, will form a third circumstance in the perdition of the ungodly.

(4.) The torments which a soul endures in the hell of fire will form, through all eternity, a continual present source of indescribable woe. Actual torment in the flames of the bottomless pit forms a fourth circumstance in the punishment of the lost.

(5.) The known impossibility of ever escaping from this place of torment, or to have any alleviation of one's misery in it, forms a fifth circumstance in the punishment of ungodly men. "Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf." The eternal purpose of God, formed on the principles of eternal reason, separates the persons, and the places of abode, of the righteous and the wicked, so that there

can be no intercourse. "They who wish to pass over hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass over, who would come from you hither." A happy spirit cannot go from heaven to alleviate their miseries; nor can any of them escape from the place of their confinement, to enter among the blessed. There may be a discovery from hell of the paradise of the blessed; but there can be no intercourse nor connexion.

(6.) The iniquitous conduct of relatives and friends, who have been perverted by the bad example of those who are lost, is a source of present punishment to them; and if they come also to the same place of torment, must be, to those who were the instruments of bringing them thither, an eternal source of anguish. "Send Lazarus to my father's family; for I have five brothers, that he may earnestly testify to them, that they come not to this place of torment." These brothers had probably been influenced by his example to content themselves with an earthly portion, and to neglect their immortal souls. Those who have been instruments of bringing others into hell shall suffer the deeper perdition on that account.

2. *If one went unto them from the dead, &c.*—Many are desirous to see an inhabitant of the other world, and converse with him, in order to know what passes there. Make way! Here is a damned soul, which Jesus Christ has evoked from the hell of fire! Hear him! Hear him tell of his torments! Hear him utter his regrets! "But we cannot see him." No: God has, in his mercy, spared you for the present this punishment. How could you bear the sight of this damned spirit? Your very nature would fall at the appearance. Jesus keeps him as it were behind the curtain, and holds a conversation with him in your hearing, which you have neither faith nor courage sufficient to hold with him yourselves.

3. *If they hear not Moses, &c.*—This answer of Abraham contains two remarkable propositions: (1.) That the sacred writings contain such proofs of a divine origin, that, though all the dead were to arise, to convince an unbeliever of the truths therein declared, the conviction could not be greater, nor the proof more evident, of the divinity and truth of these

sacred records, than that which themselves afford. (2.) That to escape eternal perdition, and get at last into eternal glory, a man is to receive the testimonies of God, and to walk according to their dictates. And these two things show the sufficiency and perfection of the sacred writings. What influence could the personal appearance of a spirit have on an unbelieving and corrupted heart? None, except to terrify it for the moment, and afterwards

to leave it ten thousand reasons for uncertainty and doubt. Christ caused this to be exemplified, in the most literal manner, by raising Lazarus from the dead. And did this convince the unbelieving Jews? No. They were so much the more enraged; and from that moment conspired both the death of Lazarus and of Christ! Faith is satisfied with such proofs as God is pleased to afford! Infidelity never has enow.

SECTION CXLIV.—THE NECESSITY OF AVOIDING GIVING OFFENCE.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XVII. 1—10.

THEN said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come :¹ But woe *unto him*, through whom they come ! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves : If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.² And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea ; and it should obey you. But which of you, having a servant³ plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat ? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken ; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink ? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants :⁴ We have done that which was our duty to do.

1. *It is impossible but that offences will come*—Such is the corrupt state of the human heart, that, notwithstanding all the influences of grace, and the promises of glory, men will continue to sin against God; and his justice must continue to punish.

2. *Increase our faith*—This work of

pardoning every offence of every man, and that continually, seemed so difficult, even to the disciples themselves, that they saw, without an extraordinary degree of faith they should never be able to keep this command.

“Now, these three duties, of an inoffensive conversation, fraternal correction, and

full forgiveness of a brother, daily multiplying fresh indignities and provocations, being so difficult and contrary to their natural inclinations; and faith being the foundation of all Christian virtues; the apostles, in order to the performance of these duties, beg the increase of faith. Moreover, seeing faith is wrought in the heart, which God alone can search, and can immediately work upon; by thus repairing to Christ to increase their faith, they must ascribe to him a divine virtue, which, being proper to the Deity, and incommunicable to a finite nature, must, consequently, show that Christ had in him a Divine nature." —WHITBY.

3. *Which of you, having a servant*—It is never supposed that the master waits on the servant; the servant is bound to wait on his master, and to do every thing for him to the uttermost of his power. Nor does the former expect thanks for it; for he is bound by his agreement to act thus, because of the stipulated reward, which is considered as being equal in value to all the service that he can perform.

4. *We are unprofitable servants*—If this text could be fairly construed to countenance sinful imperfection, it would be easy to demonstrate, that there is not one

of the spirits of just men made perfect in paradise, nor a ministering angel at the throne of God, but is sinfully imperfect; for none of these can work righteousness in the smallest degree, beyond those powers which God has given them; and justice and equity require that they should exert those powers to the uttermost in the service of their Maker; and, after having acted thus, it may be justly said, they have done only what it was their duty to do. The nature of God is illimitable, and all the attributes of that nature are infinitely glorious; they cannot be lessened by the transgressions of his creatures, nor can they be increased by the uninterrupted, eternal obedience and unceasing hallelujahs of all the intelligent creatures that people the whole vortex of nature. When ages, beyond the power of arithmetic to sum up, have elapsed, it may be said of the most pure and perfect creatures, "Ye are unprofitable servants;" ye have derived your being from the infinite Fountain of life; ye are upheld by the continued energy of the Almighty; his glories are infinite and eternal, and your obedience and services, however excellent in themselves, and profitable to you, have added nothing, and can add nothing, to the absolute excellencies and glories of your God.

SECTION CXLV.—CHRIST TRAVELS THROUGH SAMARIA; TEN LEPERS HEALED.

A. D. 29.

LUKE IX. 51—56; XVII. 11—19.

AND it came to pass, when the time was come¹ that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was² as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire³ to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.⁴ For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of

Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up *their* voices,⁵ and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests.⁶ And it came to pass, that, as they went,⁷ they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed,⁸ turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: And he was a Samaritan.⁹ And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?¹⁰ There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.¹¹ And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: Thy faith hath made thee whole.¹²

1. *When the time was come, &c.*—“Such expressions, though brief, open to us large and interesting views. They show that our Lord was not, by virtue of his being Divine, exempted from the most serious anxieties, and painful anticipations, respecting his approaching sufferings. By virtue of his omniscience the whole scene was opened before him; but, under its impresson, the humanity felt that which required the renewal and repetition of strong and holy resolutions to overcome. It was this which called forth his earnest prayers, continued through whole nights; and this which rendered it necessary to him, as his hour approached, ‘steadfastly to set his face,’ to compose himself into a firm and settled resolve, ‘to go up to Jerusalem,’ and to meet that malignity of all his enemies, to which he knew he must fall a victim. Such was the strength of that love which engaged him in the work of our salvation, the intensity of his desire to complete his glorious work, that he hastened to meet a torturing and accursed death, to pay our redemption-price, and then to surround himself with the trophies of his own mercy in the number which no man can number, rescued by his conquering arm from the power of satan, and raised to the joys and immortality of heaven.”—R. WATSON.

2. *His face was*—Those only who have deserted the truth of God, or who are uninfluenced by it, hate them who embrace and act by it. When a man has once decidedly taken the road to heaven, he can have but little credit any longer in the world.

3. *That we command fire*—Vengeance

belongs to the Lord. What we suffer for his sake should be left to himself to reprove or punish. The insult is offered to him, not to us.

4. *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*—Ye do not consider, that the present is a dispensation of infinite mercy and love; and that the design of God is not to destroy sinners, but to give them space to repent, that he may save them unto eternal life. And ye do not consider, that the zeal which you feel springs from an evil principle, being more concerned for your own honour than for the honour of God. The disciples of that Christ who died for his enemies should never think of avenging themselves on their persecutors.

5. *They lifted up their voices*—They cried with one accord; they were all equally necessitous, and there was but one voice among them all, though ten were engaged in crying at the same time. As they were companions in suffering, they were also companions in prayer. Prayer should be strong and earnest, when the disease is great and inveterate. Sin is the worst of all leprosy; it not only separates those to whom it cleaves from the righteous, but it separates them from God; and nothing but the pitying heart and powerful hand of Christ Jesus can set any soul free from it.

6. *Shew yourselves unto the priests*—Our Lord intended that their cure should be received by faith: They depended on his goodness and power; and though they had no promise, yet they went at his command to do that which those only were

required by the law to do who were already healed.

7. *And as they went*—In this spirit of implicit faith; “they were cleansed.” God highly honours this kind of faith, and makes it the instrument in his hand of working many miracles. He who will not believe till he receives what he calls a reason for it, is never likely to get his soul saved. The highest, the most sovereign, reason that can be given for believing, is, that God has commanded it.

8. *One of them, when he saw that he was healed, &c.*—It seems, that he did not wait to go first to the priest, but turned immediately back, and gave public praise to the kind hand from which he had received his cure.

9. *He was a Samaritan*—One who professed a very corrupt religion; and from whom much less was to be expected than from the other nine, who probably were Jews.

10. *Where are the nine?*—Where are the numbers that from time to time have been converted to God? Are they still found praising him, with their faces on the dust, as they did at first? Alas! how many are turned back to perdition! and how many are again mingled with the world! Reader, art thou of this number?

11. *This stranger*—Often God receives more praise and affectionate obedience from those who had long lived without his knowledge and fear, than from those who were bred up among his people, and who profess to be called by his name.

12. *Thy faith hath made thee whole*—Thy faith hath been the mean of receiving that influence by which thou hast been cleansed.

“O Saviour, when we look into those sacred acts and monuments of thine, we find many a life which thou preservedst from perishing; some that had perished by thee recalled; never any by thee destroyed! Only one poor fig-tree, as the real emblem of thy severity to the unfruitful, was blasted and withered by thy curse. But to man how ever faithful and indulgent wert thou! So repelled as thou wert; so reviled, so persecuted, laid wait for, sold, betrayed, apprehended, crucified; yet what one man didst thou strike dead for these heinous indignities? Yea, when one of thine enemies lost an ear in that ill quarrel, thou gavest that ear to him who came to take thy life from thee. I find some whom thou didst scourge and correct, as the sacrilegious money-changers; none of whom thou killedst.”—
BISHOP HALL.

SECTION CXLVI.—THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XVII. 20—37.

AND when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: ¹ Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days ² of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: Go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of

the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank,³ they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,⁴ and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: And he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.⁵ Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord?⁶ And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

1. *Cometh not with observation*—As if he had said, "The kingdom of God, the glorious religion of the Messiah, does not come in such a way as to be discerned only by sagacious critics, or is only to be seen by those who are scrupulously watching for it: It is not of such a nature as to be confined to one place, so that men might say of it, 'Behold, it is only here, or only there;' for this kingdom of God is publicly revealed, and, behold, it is among you; I proclaim it publicly, and work those miracles which prove the kingdom of God is come; and none of these things are done in a corner."

2. *When ye shall desire to see one of the days*—As it was our Lord's constant custom to support and comfort the minds of his disciples, we cannot suppose that he intimates here, that they shall be left destitute of those blessings necessary for their support in a day of trial. When he says, "Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man," he either means, "Ye of this nation, ye Jews," and addresses his disciples as if they should bear witness to the truth of the declaration, intimating that heavy calamities were about to fall upon them, and that they should desire in vain to have those opportunities of returning to

God which now they rejected; or he means, that such should the distressed state of this people be, that the disciples would, through pity and tenderness, desire the removal of those punishments from them which could not be removed because the cup of their iniquity was full. But the former is more likely to be the sense of the place.

3. *They did eat, they drank, &c.*—They spent their whole lives in reference to this world, and made no sort of provision for their immortal souls.

4. *Noe entered into the ark*—"By building the ark, Noah loudly proclaimed their danger, and, at the same time, pointed out the means of escape; but neither his diligence in building, nor his fidelity in preaching, neither his tears nor his entreaties, neither his reproofs nor his threatenings, were sufficient to bring them to repentance; they closed their eyes against the admission of light; they shut their ears against the voice of warning; they steeled their hearts against the force of example; they chose death in preference to life; in a word, they died with the remedy within their reach; and he who was raised up to be, in a subordinate sense, their Saviour, became the means of aggravating their condemnation."—P. M'OWAN.

So it was when the Romans came to destroy Judea; there was a universal carelessness, and no one seemed to regard the warnings given by the Son of God.

5. *Remember Lot's wife*—Relinquish every thing, rather than lose your souls. "She looked back;" probably she turned back also, to carry some of her goods away; for so much the preceding verse seems to intimate; and became a monument of the divine displeasure, and of her own folly and sin. It is a proof, that we have loved with a criminal affection that which we leave with grief and anxiety, though commanded by the Lord to abandon it.

6. *Where, Lord?*—In what place shall all these dreadful evils fall? The answer our Lord gives in a figure; the application of which they are to make themselves: Where the dead carcase is, there will be the birds of prey; where the sin is, there will the punishment be.

"If you flee not, as repenting sinners, to the atonement, and commit your immortal interests to the charge of Him who offered it, you will have to answer the demands of the divine justice yourselves, and, on your own heads, to sustain the inflictions of its wrath. And say, are you able to endure the visitations of the Omnipotent, when he shall arise to adjudge and to repay? Can you stand before his indignation? Can you abide in the fierceness of his anger? Can you dwell with the everlasting burning? Sinner, trifle not with thine endangered, but deathless, spirit; be reckless, be rebellious no longer. Behold the Lamb of God! look to him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn; let his great sacrifice be the object of thy grateful response; and thus, being justified by faith, thou shalt have peace with God, and be made heir according to the hope of eternal life."—J. PARSONS.

SECTION CXLVII.—THE UNJUST JUDGE.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XVIII. 1—8.

AND he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray,¹ and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:² And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: But afterward he said within himself,³ Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me,⁴ I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.⁵ And shall not God avenge his own elect,⁶ which cry day and night unto him,⁷ though he bear long with them?⁸ I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

1. *Men ought always to pray*—Therefore the plain meaning and moral of the parable are evident; namely, that as afflictions and desolations were coming on the land, and they should have need of much patience and continual fortitude, and the constant influence and protection of the Almighty, therefore they should be instant in prayer.

2. *A judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man*—It is no wonder that our Lord calls this person an unrighteous

judge. No person is worthy to be put in the sacred office of a judge who does not deeply fear God, and tenderly respect his fellow-creatures. Because this person feared not God, he paid no attention to the calls of justice; and because he respected not man, he was unmoved at the complaint of the widow. Even among the Heathens this was the character of a man totally abandoned to all evil. She desired to have justice, and that only; and by her impor-

tunity she got that which the unrighteous judge had no inclination to give, but merely for his own ease.

3. *He said within himself*—How many actions which appear good have neither the love of God, nor that of our neighbour, but only self-love of the basest kind, for their principle and motive!

4. *This widow troubleth me*—“The poor widow did not rest satisfied with one cold application to the judge. Time after time she made her grievance known to him; and was determined to prevail by persevering importunity. But how many go to the throne of grace, and present mere formal prayers, without caring whether they are answered or not! Such prayers will never prevail with our heavenly Father, because they are offered up with careless indifference, and with cold, unfeeling hearts. The widow was in good earnest. She felt a deep interest in her affairs, and was resolved to succeed. This appears by what the judge calls “*continual coming*.” She would not be denied; every refusal of the judge increased her ardour, and every repulse led to a renewed application. She had no gift to offer; but she could pray; and she prayed in good earnest, and without ceasing.”—EDMONDSON.

5. *Hear what the unjust judge saith*—Our blessed Lord intimates that we should reason thus with ourselves: “If a person of such an infamous character as this judge was could yield to the pressing and continual solicitations of a poor widow, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, how much more ready must God be, who is infinitely good and merciful, and who loves his creatures in the tenderest manner, to give his utmost salvation to all them who diligently seek it!”

6. *And shall not God avenge his own elect?*—And will not God, the righteous Judge, do justice for his chosen? As God has graciously promised to give salvation to

every soul that comes unto him through his Son, and has put his Spirit in their hearts, inducing them to cry unto him incessantly for it; the goodness of his nature and the promise of his grace bind him to hear the prayers they offer unto him, and to grant them all that salvation which he has led them by his promise and Spirit to request.

7. *Which cry day and night unto him, &c.*—This is a genuine characteristic of the true elect or disciples of Christ. They feel they have neither light, power, nor goodness, but as they receive them from him; and, as he is the desire of their soul, they incessantly seek that they may be upheld and saved by him.

8. *Though he bear long with them*—Rather, “And he is compassionate towards them;” and, consequently, not at all like the unrighteous judge. The reason which our Lord gives for the success of his chosen, is, (1.) “They cry unto him day and night.” (2.) “He is compassionate toward them.” In consequence of the first, they might expect justice even from an unrighteous judge; and, in consequence of the second, they are sure of salvation, because they ask it from that God who is towards them a Father of eternal love and compassion. There was little reason to expect justice from the unrighteous judge: (1.) Because he was unrighteous; and, (2.) Because he had no respect for man: No, not even for a poor desolate widow. But there is all the reason under heaven to expect mercy from God: (1.) Because he is righteous, and he has promised it; and, (2.) Because he is compassionate towards his creatures; being ever prone to give more than the most enlarged heart can request of him. Every reader must perceive that the common translation is so embarrassed as to be almost unintelligible; while that in this note is as plain as possible, and shows this beautiful parable to be one of the most invaluable pieces in the word of God.

SECTION CXLVIII.—THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XVIII. 9—14.

AND he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men

went up into the temple to pray; ¹ the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ² God, I thank thee, ³ that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ⁴ And the publican, standing afar off, ⁵ would not lift up so much as *his* eyes ⁶ unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, ⁷ saying, God be merciful to me ⁸ a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified ⁹ *rather* than the other: ¹⁰ For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

1. *Two men went up into the temple to pray*—Both these persons went to the temple to pray; that is, to worship God: They were probably both Jews, and felt themselves led by different motives to attend at the temple, at the hour of prayer; the one to return thanks for the mercies he had received, the other to implore that grace which alone could redeem him from his sins.

2. *Stood and prayed thus with himself*—Or, “stood by himself and prayed,” as some would translate the words. He probably supposed it disgraceful to appear to have any connexion with this penitent publican: Therefore his conduct seemed to say, “Stand by thyself: I am more holy than thou.” He seems not only to have stood by himself, but also to have prayed by himself; neither associating in person nor in petitions with his poor gully neighbour.

3. *I thank thee, &c.*—The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is described here by a Pharisee himself. We find it was twofold: (1.) It consisted in doing no harm to others. (2.) In attending all the ordinances of God, then established in the Jewish economy; and in these things they were not like other men, the bulk of the inhabitants of the land paying little or no attention to them. That the Pharisees were in their origin a pure and holy people, can admit of little doubt; but that they had awfully degenerated before our Lord's time, is sufficiently evident. They had lost the spirit of their institution, and retained nothing else than its external regulations. (1.) This Pharisee did no harm to others: “I am not rapacious, nor unjust, nor an adulterer. I seize no man's property through false pretences. I take the ad-

vantage of no man's ignorance in buying or selling. I avoid every species of uncleanness. In a word, I do to others as I wish them to do to me.” How many of those called Christians are not half as good as this Pharisee! And, yet, he was far from the kingdom of God. (2.) He observed the ordinances of religion: “I fast twice in the week.”

4. *I give tithes of all that I possess*—The Pharisee's meaning seems to be, “As fast as I gain any thing, I give the tenth part of it to the house of God and to the poor.” Those who dedicate a certain part of their earnings to the Lord should never let it rest with themselves, lest possession should produce covetousness. This was the Pharisee's righteousness, and the ground on which he built his hope of final salvation.

5. *The publican, standing afar off*—Not because he was a Heathen, and dared not approach the holy place; for it is likely he was a Jew; but because he was a true penitent, and felt himself utterly unworthy to appear before God.

6. *Would not lift up his eyes*—Holding down the head, with the eyes fixed upon the earth, was, (1.) A sign of deep distress. (2.) Of a consciousness and confession of guilt. And, (3.) It was the very posture that the Jewish Rabbins required in those who prayed to God.

7. *But smote upon his breast*—Smiting the breast was a token of excessive grief, commonly practised in all nations. It seems to intimate a desire, in the penitent, to punish that heart through the evil propensities of which the sin deplored had been committed.

8. *God be merciful to me*—“Be propitious toward me through sacrifice!” Or, “Let an atonement be made for me!” I am a sin-

ner, and cannot be saved but in this way. We see, then, at once, the reason why our blessed Lord said that the tax-gatherer "went down to his house justified rather than the other." He sought for mercy through an atonement for sin, which was the only way in which God had from the beginning purposed to save sinners. As the Pharisee depended on his doing no harm, and observing the ordinances of religion for his acceptance with God, according to the economy of grace and justice, he must be rejected: For as all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, and no man could make an atonement for his sins, so he who did not take refuge in that which God's mercy had provided must be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. This was no new doctrine; it was the doctrine publicly and solemnly preached by every sacrifice offered under the Jewish law. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," was the loud and constant cry of the whole Mosaic economy. From this we may see what it is to have a righteousness superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees. We must humble ourselves before God, which they did not; we must take refuge in the blood of the cross, which they would not; and be meek and humble of heart, which they were not. Many suppose that the Pharisees thought they could acquire righteousness of themselves, independently of God, and that they did not depend on him for grace or power: But let us not make them worse than they were; for this is disclaimed by the Pharisee in the text, who attributes all the good he had to God: "O God, I thank thee, that I am not as others;" it is thou who hast made me to differ. But this was not sufficient; restraining grace must not be put in the place of the great atonement. Guilt he had contracted, and this guilt must be blotted out; and that there was no way of

doing this, but through an atonement, the whole Jewish law declared.

9. *Went down to his house justified*—His sin blotted out, and himself accepted.

10. *Rather than the other*—That is, the other was not accepted, because he exalted himself; he made use of the mercies which he acknowledged he owed to God, to make claims on the divine approbation, and to monopolize the salvation of the Most High! He was abased, because he vainly trusted that he was righteous, and depended on what he had been enabled to do, and looked not for a change of heart, nor for reconciliation to God. It is a strange perversion of the human mind, to attempt to make God our debtor by the very blessings which his mere mercy has conferred upon us! It was a maxim among the Jews, that whoever brought a sacrifice to the temple returned justified. But our Lord shows that this depended on the state of mind; if they were not humbled under a sense of sin, they were not justified, though they had even offered a sacrifice.

"To justify a sinner, is to account and consider him relatively righteous, and to deal with him as such, notwithstanding his past actual unrighteousness; by clearing, absolving, discharging, and releasing him from various penal evils, and especially from the wrath of God, and the liability to eternal death, which by that past unrighteousness he had deserved; and by accepting him as if just, and admitting him to the state, the privileges, and the rewards of righteousness. The faith, to which the privilege of justification is annexed, is such a belief of the gospel, by the power of the Spirit of God, as leads us to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to trust in Christ, and to commit the keeping of our souls into his hands, in humble confidence of his ability and his willingness to save us."—BUNTING.

SECTION CXLIX.—A BLIND MAN RESTORED TO SIGHT.

A. D. 29.

JOHN IX. 1—23.

AND as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? *Jesus* answered,

Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents :¹ But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day :² The night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.³ When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man⁴ with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he :⁵ Others *said*, He is like him :⁶ *But* he said, I am *he*. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus⁷ made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash : And I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God,⁸ because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner⁹ do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.¹⁰ But the Jews did not believe¹¹ concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind : But by what means he now seeth, we know not ; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not : He is of age ; ask him : He shall speak for himself. These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews : For the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age ; ask him.

1. *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents*—That is, the blindness of this person is not occasioned by any sin of his own, nor of his parents ; but has happened in the ordinary course of divine providence, and shall now become the instrument of salvation to his soul, edification to others,

and glory to God. Many of the Jews thought that marks on the body were proofs of sin in the soul. From a like persuasion, probably, arose that proverb among out northern neighbours, "Mark him whom God marks."

2. *While it is day*—Though I plainly

perceive that the cure of this man will draw down upon me the malice of the Jewish rulers, yet I must accomplish the work for which I came into the world "while it is day;" while the term of this life of mine shall last. It was about six months after this that our Lord was crucified. It is very likely that the day was now declining, and night coming on; and he took occasion from this circumstance to introduce the elegant metaphor immediately following. By this we are taught, that no opportunity for doing good should be omitted; "day" representing the opportunity; "night," the loss of that opportunity.

3. *I am the light of the world*—Like the sun, it is my business to dispense light and heat every where; and to neglect no opportunity that may offer to enlighten and save the bodies and souls of men. See John viii. 12.

4. *Anointed the eyes of the blind man*—It would be difficult to find out the reason which induced our Lord to act thus. It is certain, this procedure can never be supposed to have been any likely medical means to restore sight to a man who was "born blind;" this action, therefore, had no tendency to assist the miracle. If his eye-lids had been only so gummed together that they needed nothing but to be suppled and well washed, it is not likely that this could possibly have been omitted from his birth until now. The Jews believed that there was some virtue in spittle to cure the diseases of the eye; but then they always accompanied this with some charm. Our Lord might make clay with the spittle to show, that no charms or spells were used, and to draw their attention more particularly to the miracle which he was about to work. Perhaps the best lesson we can learn from this is, that God will do his own work in his own way; and, to hide pride from man, will often accomplish the most beneficial ends by means not only simple or despicable in themselves, but by such also as appear entirely contrary, in their nature and operation, to the end proposed to be effected by them.

5. *Some said, This is he*—This miracle was not wrought in private, nor before a few persons, nor was it lightly credited. Those who knew him before were divided

in their opinion concerning him; not whether the man who sat there begging was blind before, for this was known to all; nor whether the person now before them saw clearly, for this was now notorious; but whether this was the person who was born blind, and who used, in a particular place, to sit begging.

6. *Others said, He is like him*—This was very natural; for certainly the restoration of his sight must have given him a very different appearance to what he had before.

7. *A man that is called Jesus*—The whole of this relation is simple and artless in the highest degree. The blind man had never seen Jesus, but he had heard of his name. He felt that he had put something on his eyes, which he afterwards found to be clay; but how this was made he could not tell, because he could not see Jesus when he did it; therefore he does not say he made clay of spittle, but simply, "He made clay, and spread it upon my eyes." Where a multitude of incidents must necessarily come into review, imposture and falsehood generally commit themselves, as it is termed; but however numerous the circumstances may be in a relation of fact, simple truth is never embarrassed.

8. *This man is not of God*—He can neither be the Messiah, nor a prophet; for he has broken the sabbath. The Jews always argued falsely on this principle. The law relative to the observation of the sabbath never forbade any work but what was of the servile and unnecessary kind. Works of necessity and mercy never could be forbidden on that day by him whose name is Mercy, and whose nature is Love; for the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; were it otherwise, the sabbath would be rather a curse than a blessing.

9. *How can a man that is a sinner, &c.*—They knew very well, that, though magicians and impostors might do things apparently miraculous, yet nothing really good could be performed by them. We might have safely defied all the magicians of Egypt—who are said to have been so successful in imitating some of the miracles of Moses—to have opened the eyes of one blind man, or to have done any essential good either to the body or to the soul.

10. *He is a prophet*—They had intended to lay snares for the poor man, that, getting him to acknowledge Christ for the Messiah, they might put him out of the synagogue, or put him to death, that such a witness to the divine power of Christ might not appear against them. But as the mercy of God had given him his sight, so the wisdom of God taught him how to escape the snares laid for his ruin: "On all thy glory there shall be a defence." When God gives any particular mercy or grace, he sends power to preserve it, and wisdom to improve it. The man said, "He is a prophet." Now, according to a Jewish maxim, a prophet might dispense with the observation of the sabbath. If they allow that Jesus was a prophet, then, even in their sense, he might break the law of the sabbath, and be guiltless; or, if they

did not allow him to be a prophet, they must account for the miracle some other way than by the power of God; as from *satan* or his agents no good can proceed, to do this it was impossible. So the wisdom of God taught the poor man to give them such an answer, as put them into a complete dilemma, from which they could not possibly extricate themselves.

11. *But the Jews did not believe*—All the subterfuge they could use was simply to sin against their conscience, by asserting that the man had not been blind; but out of this subterfuge they were soon driven by the testimony of the parents, who, if tried farther on this subject, might have produced as witness, not only the whole neighbourhood, but nearly the whole city; for it appears the man got his bread by publicly begging.

SECTION CL.—THE MAN WHO HAD RECEIVED SIGHT CAST OUT.

A.D. 29.

JOHN IX. 24—41.

THEN again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: ¹ We know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.² Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already,³ and ye did not hear: Wherefore would ye hear *it* again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: *As for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is.⁴ The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing,⁵ that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners:⁶ But if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God,⁷ he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins,⁸ and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.⁹ Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord,¹⁰ that I might believe on him?

And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe.¹¹ And he worshipped him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come¹² into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind,¹³ ye should have no sin: But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

1. *Give God the praise*—Having called the man a second time, they proceeded to deal with him in the most solemn manner; and therefore they put him to his oath; for the words above were the form of an oath, proposed by the chief magistrate to those who were to give evidence to any particular fact, or to attest any thing, as produced by or belonging to the Lord. But, while they solemnly put him to his oath, they endeavour to put their own words in his mouth, namely, "He is a sinner," a pretender to the prophetic character, and a transgressor of the law of God: Assert this, or you will not please us.

2. *Whereas I was blind, now I see*—He pays no attention to their cavils, nor to their perversion of justice; but, in the simplicity of his heart, speaks to the fact, of the reality of which he was ready to give them the most substantial evidence.

3. *I have told you already*—So he did, verse 15. "And did ye not hear?" Ye certainly did. "Why then do you wish to hear it again?" Is it because ye wish to become his disciples? The poor man continued steady in his testimony; and, by putting this question to them, he knew he should soon put an end to the debate.

4. *We know not from whence he is*—As if they had said: "We have the fullest assurance that the commissioner of Moses was divine; but we have no proof that this man has such a commission: And should we leave Moses, and attach ourselves to this stranger? No."

5. *Why herein is a marvellous thing*—As if he had said, "This is wonderful indeed!" Is it possible that such persons as you are, whose business it is to distinguish good from evil, and who pretend to know a true from a false prophet, cannot decide in a case so plain? Has not the man opened my eyes? Is not the miracle

known to all the town; and could any one do it who was not endued with the power of God?

6. *God heareth not sinners*—When they regard iniquity in their heart; when they wish to be saved, and yet abide in their sins; when they will not separate themselves from the workers and works of iniquity; in all these cases, "God heareth not sinners."

7. *If this man were not of God, &c.*—A very just conclusion: God is the Fountain of all good: All good must proceed from him, and no good can be done but through him. If this person were not commissioned by the good God, he could not perform such beneficent miracles as these.

8. *Thou wast altogether born in sins*—Thou hast not only been a vile wretch in some other pre-existent state, but thy parents also have been grossly iniquitous; therefore thou and they are punished by this blindness: "Thou wast altogether born in sins;" thou art no other than a sinful lump of deformity, and utterly unfit to have any connexion with those who worship God.

9. *And they cast him out*—They immediately excommunicated him; drove him from their assembly with disdain, and forbade his farther appearing in the worship of God. Thus a simple man, guided by the Spirit of truth, and continuing steady in his testimony, utterly confounded the most eminent Jewish doctors. When they had no longer either reason or argument to oppose to him, as a proof of their discomfiture and a monument of their reproach and shame, they had recourse to the secular arm, and thus silenced by political power a person whom they had neither reason nor religion to withstand. They have had since many followers in their crimes. A false religion, supported by the state, has,

by fire and sword, silenced those whose truth in the end annihilated the system of their opponents.

10. *Who is he, Lord?*—It is very likely that the blind man did not know that it was Jesus the Christ who now spoke to him; for it is evident he had never seen him before this time; and he might now see him without knowing that he was the person by whom he was cured, till our Lord made that discovery of himself, mentioned in the following verse.

11. *And he said, Lord, I believe*—That is, I believe thou art the Messiah; and, to give the fullest proof of the sincerity of his faith, he fell down before and adored him. Never having seen Jesus before, but simply knowing that a person of that name had opened his eyes, he had only considered him as a holy man and a prophet; but, now that he sees and hears him, he is convinced of his Divinity, and glorifies him as his Saviour. We may hear much of Jesus, but can never know his glories and excellencies till he has discovered himself to our hearts by his own Spirit; then we believe on him, trust him with our souls, and trust in him for our salvation.

12. *For judgment I am come*—I am come to manifest and execute the just judgment of God: (1.) By giving sight to the blind, and light to the Gentiles who sit in darkness. (2.) By removing the true light from those who, pretending to make a proper use of it, only abuse the mercy of God. In a word, salvation shall be taken away from the Jews, because they reject it; and the kingdom of God shall be given to the Gentiles.

13. *If ye were blind*—If ye had not had sufficient opportunities to have acquainted yourselves with my divine nature, by the unparalleled miracles which I have wrought before you, and the holy doctrine which I have preached, then your rejecting me could not be imputed to you as sin; but because ye say, "We see"—we are perfectly capable of judging between a true and a false prophet, and can from the scriptures point out the Messiah by his works—on this account you are guilty, and your sin is of no common nature; it "remaineth," that is, it shall not be expiated: As ye have rejected the Lord from being your deliverer, so the Lord has rejected you from being his people. When the scripture speaks of sin remaining, it is always put in opposition to pardon; for pardon is termed "the taking away of sin." The history of the man who was born blind and cured by our Lord is, in every point of view, instructive. His simplicity, his courage, his constancy, and his gratitude are all so many subjects worthy of attention and emulation. He certainly confessed the truth at the most imminent risk of his life; and therefore, as Stephen was the first martyr for Christianity, this man was the first confessor. The power and influence of truth, in supporting its friends and confounding its adversaries, are well exemplified in him; and, not less so, that providence of God by which he was preserved from the malice of these bad men. The whole story is related with inimitable simplicity, and cannot be read by the most cold-hearted without extorting the exclamation, "How forcible are right words!"

SECTION CLI.—CHRIST THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP.

A.D. 29.

JOHN X. 1—10.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door¹ into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door² is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; ³ and the sheep hear his voice: ⁴ And he calleth his own sheep by name, ⁵ and leadeth them out. ⁶ And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, ⁷ and the sheep follow him: For they know his

voice. And a stranger will they not follow,⁸ but will flee from him : For they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them : But they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.⁹ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : But the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : By me if any man enter¹⁰ in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out,¹¹ and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy :¹² I am come that they might have life,¹³ and that they might have *it* more abundantly.¹⁴

OUR Lord introduces this discourse in a most solemn manner, "Verily, verily!" *Amen, amen!* "It is true, it is true!" a Hebraism for, "This is a most important and interesting truth; a truth of the utmost concern to mankind." At all times our Lord speaks what is infallibly true; but when he delivers any truths with this particular asseveration, it is either, (1.) Because they are of greater importance; or, (2.) Because the mind of man is more averse from them; or, (3.) Because the small number of those who will practise them may render them incredible.

1. *He that entereth not by the door*—Christ assures us that he is "the door;" whoever, therefore, enters not by Jesus Christ into the pastoral office, is no other than "a thief and a robber" in the sheep-fold. And he enters not by Jesus Christ who enters with a prospect of any other interest besides that of Christ and his people. Ambition, avarice, love of ease, a desire to enjoy the conveniences of life, to be distinguished from the crowd, to promote the interests of one's family, and even the sole design of providing against want,—these are all ways by which thieves and robbers enter into the church. And whoever enters by any of these ways, or by simony, craft, solicitation, &c., deserves no better name. Acting through motives of self-interest, and with the desire of providing for himself and his family, are innocent, yea, laudable, in a secular business; but to enter into the ministerial office through motives of this kind is highly criminal before God.

2. *He that entereth in by the door*—Observe here the marks, qualities, and duties

of a good pastor: The first mark is, that he has a lawful entrance into the ministry by the internal call of Christ, namely, by an impulse proceeding from his Spirit, upon considerations which respect only his glory, and upon motives which aim at nothing but the good of his church, the salvation of souls, the doing the will of God, and the sacrificing himself entirely to his service, and to that of the meanest of his flock.

3. *To him the porter openeth*—In the porter opening the door to the true Shepherd, we may discover the second mark of a true minister; his labour is crowned with success. The Holy Spirit opens his way into the hearts of his hearers, and he becomes the instrument of their salvation.

4. *The sheep hear his voice*—A third mark of a good shepherd is that he speaks so as to instruct the people. "The sheep hear his voice;" he does not take the fat and the fleece, and leave another hireling on less pay to do the work of the pastoral office. No: Himself preaches Christ Jesus the Lord, and in that simplicity, too, that is best calculated to instruct the common people. A man who preaches in such a language as the people cannot comprehend may do for a stage-player or a mountebank, but not for a minister of Christ.

5. *He calleth his own sheep by name*—A fourth mark of a good pastor is, that he is well acquainted with his flock; he knows them by name, he takes care to acquaint himself with the spiritual state of all those that are entrusted to him. He speaks to them concerning their souls; and thus getting a thorough knowledge of their state, he is the better qualified to profit them by

his public ministrations. He who has not a proper acquaintance with the church of Christ, can never by his preaching build it up in its most holy faith.

6. *And leadeth them out*—A fifth mark of a good shepherd is, he leads the flock, does not lord it over God's heritage; nor attempt, by any rigorous discipline not founded on the gospel of Christ, to drive men into the way of life; nor drive them out of it, which many do, by a severity which is a disgrace to the mild gospel of the God of peace and love. He leads them out of themselves to Christ, out of the follies, diversions, and amusements of the world, into the path of Christian holiness: In a word, he leads them, by those gentle yet powerful persuasions that flow from a heart full of the word and love of Christ, into the kingdom and glory of his God.

7. *He goeth before them*—A sixth mark of a true pastor is, he gives them a good example: He not only preaches, but he lives, the truth of the gospel; he enters into the depths of the salvation of God; and, having thus explored the path, he knows how to lead those who are entrusted to his care into the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. He who does not endeavour to realize in his own soul the truths which he preaches to others, will soon be as salt without its savour; his preaching cannot be accompanied with that unction which alone can make it acceptable and profitable to those whose hearts are right with God. The minister who is in this state of salvation, "the sheep," genuine Christians, "will follow, for they know his voice." It was the custom in the eastern countries for the shepherd to go at the head of his sheep, and they followed him from pasture to pasture. I have seen many hundreds of sheep thus following their shepherd on the extensive downs in the western parts of England.

8. *And a stranger will they not follow*—That is, a man who, pretending to be a shepherd of the flock of God, is a stranger to that salvation which he professes to preach. His mode of preaching soon proves, to those whose hearts are acquainted with the truths of God, that he is a stranger to them; and therefore, knowing him to have got into the fold in an improper way, they consider him "a thief,"

"a robber," and a murderer; and who can blame them if they wholly desert his ministry? There are preachers of this kind among all classes.

9. *I am the door of the sheep*—It is through me only that a man can have a lawful entrance into the ministry; and it is through me alone that mankind can be saved.

10. *I am the door: By me if any man enter, &c.*—Those who come for salvation to God, through Christ, shall obtain it: "He shall be saved;" he shall have his sins blotted out, his soul purified, and himself preserved unto eternal life.

11. *Go in and out*—This phrase points out all the actions of a man's life, and the liberty he has of acting, or not acting. A "good shepherd" conducts his flock to the fields where good pasturage is to be found; watches over them while there, and brings them back again, and secures them in the fold. So he that is taught and called of God feeds the flock of Christ with those truths of his word of grace which nourish them unto eternal life; and God blesses together both the shepherd and the sheep, so that going out and coming in they "find pasture." Every occurrence is made useful to them; and all things work together for their good.

12. *But for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*—Those who enter into the priesthood, that they may enjoy the revenues of the church, are the basest and vilest of thieves and murderers. Their ungodly conduct is a snare to the simple, and the occasion of much scandal to the cause of Christ. Their doctrine is deadly; they are not commissioned by Christ, and therefore they cannot profit the people. Their character is well pointed out by the prophet Ezekiel, xxxiv. 2, &c.: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves! Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fed: But ye feed not the flock," &c. How can worldly-minded, hireling, fox-hunting, and card-playing priests read these words of the Lord, without trembling to the centre of their souls? Woe to those parents who bring up their children merely for church honours and emoluments! Suppose a person have all the church's revenues, if he have God's woe, how miserable is his

portion! Let none apply this censure to any one class of preachers exclusively.

13. *That they might have life*—My doctrine tends to life, because it is the true doctrine. That of the false and bad shepherds tends to death, because it neither comes from nor can lead to that God who is the Fountain of life.

14. *Might have it more abundantly*—That they might have an abundance, meaning either of life, or of all necessary good things; greater felicity than ever was enjoyed under any period of the Mosaic dispensation; and it is certain

that Christians have enjoyed greater blessings and privileges than were ever possessed by the Jews, even in the promised land.

“The light of the world,” “the good shepherd,” and “the door” which leads into the sheepfold, are all to be understood as meaning Jesus Christ; the “hireling shepherds,” the wilfully blind; the “murderers” and “robbers” are the false Christs, false prophets, scribes, Pharisees, wicked hireling priests, and ungodly ministers of all sorts, whether among primitive Jews or modern Christians.

SECTION CLII.—CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

A. D. 29.

JOHN X. 11—21.

I AM the good shepherd: The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not,¹ seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: And the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*,² and am known of mine.³ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: And I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have,⁴ which are not of this fold: Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me,⁵ because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad;⁶ why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil.⁷ Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

1. *Whose own the sheep are not*—A hireling priest, who has never been the instrument of bringing souls to God, will not abide with them in the time of danger or persecution. They are not the produce of his labour, faith, and prayers; he has no other interest in their welfare than that which comes from the fleece and the fat. The hireling counts the sheep his own no longer than they are profitable to him; the

good shepherd looks upon them as his, so long as he can be profitable to them.

2. *I know my sheep*—I know them that are mine: I know their hearts, their wishes, their purposes, their circumstances; and I “approve” of them; for in this sense the word “to know” is often taken in the scriptures.

3. *And am known of mine*—They know me as their Father, Protector, and Saviour; the

they acknowledge me and my truth before the world; and they approve of me, my word, my ordinances, and my people; and manifest this by their attachment to me, and their zeal for my glory.

4. *Other sheep I have*—The Gentiles and Samaritans. As if our Lord had said, Do not imagine that I shall lay down my life for the Jews exclusively of all other people. No: I shall die also for the Gentiles; for “by the grace,” the merciful design and loving purpose, “of God, I am to taste death for every man;” and, though they are not of this fold now, those among them that believe shall be united with the believing Jews, and made one fold under one Shepherd.

5. *Therefore doth my Father love me*—As I shall be shortly crucified by you, do not imagine that I am abandoned by my heavenly Father, and therefore fall thus into your hands. The Father loveth me particularly on this account, because I am going to lay down my life for the life of the world. Again: Do not suppose that I shall be put to death by your rulers, because I have not strength to resist them. I lay down my life voluntarily and cheerfully; no one can take it away from me; and I shall give you the fullest proof of my supreme power, by raising, in three days, that very crucified, wounded body from the grave.

6. *He hath a devil, and is mad*—So, then, a demoniac and a madman were not exactly the same in the apprehension of the Jews; no more than the effect is the same with the cause which produces it. Some will have it, that, when the Jews told our Lord that he had a demon, they meant no more than that he was deranged; but here

these matters are evidently distinguished. They believed him to be possessed by a demon, who deranged his faculties, and that he must have been a wicked man, and a deceiver, thus to be put under the power of such a spirit.

7. *These are not the words of him that hath a devil*.—If he were deranged by an unclean spirit, his words would bear a similitude to the spirit that produced them; but these are words of deep sense, soberness, and piety: Besides, could a demoniac open the eyes of blind men? This is not the work of a demon. Now, we have seen that this man has restored a man who was born blind. Therefore, it is demonstrably evident, that he is neither a madman nor a demoniac.

Behold the usage which the blessed Lord received from his creatures! And behold with what meekness and gentleness he conducts himself! Not a word of impatience proceeds from his lips; nor a look of contempt or indignation is seen in his face. And what was he doing to merit all this? Why, he was instructing the ignorant, and telling the wretched that he was just going to die to save their souls! Amazing love of God, and ingratitude and obduracy of men! Let not the disciple suppose that, in this respect, he shall be above his master. When a minister of Christ has done his utmost to do good to his fellow-creatures, let him not be surprised if he meet with nothing from many but reproaches and persecutions for his pains. The grand point is to take Jesus for an example of suffering, and to be armed with the same mind. It appears that the words spoken by the friendly Jews prevailed; and that the others were obliged to abandon the field.

SECTION CLIII.—JESUS CHRIST ONE WITH THE FATHER.

A. D. 29.

JOHN X. 22—42.

AND it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? ¹ If thou be the Christ, tell us

plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you,² and ye believed not : The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice,³ and I know them, and they follow me : And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish,⁴ neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all ;⁵ and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one.⁶ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you⁷ from my Father ; for which of those works do ye stone me ? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man,⁸ makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods ? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works⁹ of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works :¹⁰ That ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him :¹¹ But he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized ; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle : But all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.¹²

1. *How long dost thou make us to doubt?*—The Jews asked this question through extreme perfidiousness : They wished to get him to declare himself king of the Jews, that they might accuse him to the Roman governor ; and by it they insolently insinuated, that all the proofs he had hitherto given them of his divine mission were good for nothing.

2. *I told you, &c.*—That is, I told you before, what I tell you now again, that “ the works which I do bear testimony to me.” I have told you that “ I am the Light of the world, the Son of God, the good Shepherd ; ” that I am come to save, to give life, to give liberty, to redeem you ; that, in order to this, I must die, and rise again ; and that I am absolute master of my life, and of my death. Have you not noticed my omniscience, in searching and discovering the very secrets of your hearts ?

Have you not seen my omnipotence, in the miracles which I have wrought ? Have not all these been sufficient to convince you ? and yet ye will not believe.

3. *My sheep hear my voice*—But ye will not hear : “ My sheep follow me ; ” but ye will neither follow nor acknowledge me. Any person who reads without prejudice may easily see, that our Lord does not at all insinuate, that these persons could not believe because God had made it impossible to them ; but simply because they did not hear and follow Christ, which the whole of our blessed Lord's discourse proves that they might have done. The sheep of Christ are not those who are included in any eternal decree, to the exclusion of others from the yearnings of the bowels of eternal mercy ; but they are those who hear, believe in, follow, and obey the Saviour of the world.

4. *They shall never perish*—Why? Because they hear my voice, and follow me; therefore I know, I approve of and love them, and give them eternal life. They who continue to hear Christ's voice, and to follow him, shall never perish. They give themselves up to God; believe so on Jesus that he lives in their hearts: "God hath given unto them eternal life, and this life is in his Son; and he that hath the Son hath life." Now, it is evident, that only those who have Christ living in and governing their souls, so that they possess the mind that was in him, are his sheep, are those that shall never perish, because they have this eternal life abiding in them: Therefore, to talk of a man's being one of the elect, one that shall never perish, one who shall have eternal life, who shall never be plucked out of the hand of God, &c., while he lives in sin, has no Christ in his heart, has either never received or fallen away from the grace of God, is as contrary to common sense as it is to the nature and testimonies of the Most High. Final perseverance implies final faithfulness; "he that endures to the end shall be saved;" he that is faithful unto death shall have a crown of life. And will any man attempt to say that he who does not endure to the end, and is unfaithful, shall ever enter into life?

5. *My Father is greater than all*—More powerful than all the united energies of men and demons. He who loves God must be happy; and he who fears him need fear nothing on this side eternity.

6. *I and my Father are one*—If Jesus Christ were not God, could he have said these words without being guilty of blasphemy?

7. *Many good works have I shewed you*—I have healed your sick, delivered those of you who were possessed from the power of demons; I have fed multitudes of your poor, and I have taught you in all places, at all times, without expense, with patience; and is this my reward?

8. *Thou, being a man*—That is, only a man, "makest thyself God." When Christ said before, "I and my Father are one," had the Jews understood him, as many called Christians profess to do, as only saying he had a unity of sentiments with the Father, they would not have attempted to treat him for this as a blasphemous; be-

cause in this sense Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David, and all the prophets, were one with God. But what irritated them so much was, that they understood him as speaking of a unity of nature. Therefore, they say here, "Thou makest thyself God;" which word they understood, not in a figurative, metaphorical, or improper sense, but in the most literal meaning of the term.

9. *If I do not the works, &c.*—I desire you to believe only on the evidence of my works: If I do not do such works as God only can perform, then believe me not.

10. *Believe the works*—Though ye do not now credit what I have said to you, yet consider my works, and then ye will see that these works prove, that "I am in the Father, and the Father in me," and, consequently, that "I and the Father are one." This seems to be the force of our Lord's argument; and every man must see and feel that it is conclusive. There was no possibility of weakening the force of this reasoning, but by asserting that these miracles were not wrought by the power of God; and then they must have proved that not only a man, but a bad man, such as they said Jesus was, could work these miracles. As this was impossible, then the argument of Christ had a complete triumph.

11. *They sought again to take him*—They could not reply to his arguments but by stones. The evidence of the truth could not be resisted; and they endeavoured to destroy the person who spoke it. Truth may confound the obstinately wicked, but it does not convert them; and it is a just judgment of God, to leave those to perish in their gainsayings who obstinately continue to gainsay and disbelieve.

12. *Many believed on him there*—The people believed on him: (1.) Because of the testimony of John the Baptist, whom they knew to be a good and a wise man, and a prophet of the Lord; and they knew he could neither deceive nor be deceived in this matter; and, (2.) They believed because of the miracles which they saw Jesus work. These fully proved that all that John had said of him was true. The scribes and Pharisees, with all their science, could not draw a conclusion so just. Truth and common sense are often on the side of the common people, whom the insolently wise,

the unsanctifiedly learned, and the tyrannically powerful sometimes disingenuously brand with the epithets of "mob" and "swinish multitude."

(1.) This and the preceding chapter contain two remarkable discomfitures of the Jewish doctors. In the former they were confounded by the testimony of a plain, uneducated man, simply appealing to the various circumstances of a matter-of-fact, at which they cavilled, and which they endeavoured to decry. In this chapter the wise are taken in their own craftiness: The Pharisees are confounded by that wisdom which is from above, speaking of and manifesting the deep things of God. Sometimes God himself stops the mouths of gainsayers; at other times he makes the simplest of his followers too mighty for the most learned among the doctors. Ancient and modern martyrologies of the people of God abound with proofs of both these facts. And the persecutions of the Protestants by the Papists in the reign of Queen Mary afford a very large proportion of proofs. In these the mighty power of God, and the prevalence of truth, were gloriously apparent.

Both the word of God and the Protestant cause were nobly illustrated by those transactions. May that abomination that maketh desolate never more sit in the holy place!

(2.) It must be remarked, by every serious reader, that our Lord did frequently speak of himself to the Jews, as being not only sent of God as their Messiah, but as being one with him. And it is as evident, that in this sense the priests and Pharisees understood him; and it was because they would not credit this that they accused him of blasphemy. Now, if our Lord was not the person they understood him to state himself to be, he had the fairest opportunity, from their strong remonstrances, to correct their misapprehension of his words, if they really had mistaken his meaning; but this he never attempts. He rather strengthens his assertions in his consequent discourses with them; which, had not his positions been true, he could not have done, even as an honest man. He not only asserted himself to be equal with God, but wished them to believe it to be true; and he amply confirmed this heavenly doctrine by the miracles he wrought.

SECTION CLIV.—DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XIX. 1—12; MARK X. 1—12.

AND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he arose from thence, *and* departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa, beyond Jordan: And great multitudes followed him, and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and asked him, saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that God, he which made *them* from the beginning¹ of the creation, made them male and female,² and said, For this cause³ shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: And they twain shall be one flesh?⁴ Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement,⁵ and to put her away? And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts wrote you this precept, *and* suffered you to put away your wives: But from the beginning it was not so. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. And he saith unto them, I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication,⁶ and shall marry another, committeth adultery against her: And whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. And if a woman shall put away her husband,⁷ and be married to another, she committeth adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man⁸ be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.⁹ But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: And there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

1. *He which made them from the beginning*—When Adam and Eve were the first of human kind.

2. *Made them male and female*—Merely through the design of matrimonial union, that the earth might be thus peopled. To answer a case of conscience, a man should act as Christ does here; pay no regard to that which the corruption of manners has introduced into divine ordinances, but go back to the original will, purpose, and institution of God. Christ will never accommodate his morality to the times, nor to the inclinations of men. What was done at the beginning is what God judged most worthy of his glory, most profitable for man, and most suitable to nature.

3. *For this cause*—Being created for this very purpose, that they might glorify their Maker in a matrimonial connexion. "A man shall leave" ("wholly give up") "both father and mother;" the matrimonial union being more intimate and binding than even paternal or filial affection: And shall be "closely united," "shall be firmly cemented," to his wife: A beautiful metaphor, which most forcibly intimates that nothing but death can separate them: As a well-glued board will break sooner in the whole wood, than in the glued joint.

4. *And they twain shall be one flesh*—

Not only meaning, that they should be considered as one body, but also as two souls in one body, with a complete union of interests, and an indissoluble partnership of life and fortune, comfort and support, desires and inclinations, joys and sorrows.

5. *Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement?*—It is not an unusual case for the impure and unholy to seek for a justification of their conduct from the law of God itself, and to wrest scripture to their own destruction. I knew a gentleman, so called, who professed deep reverence for the sacred writings, and, strange as it may appear, was outwardly irreproachable in every respect but one; that was, he kept more women than his wife. This man frequently read the Bible, and was particularly conversant with those places that spoke of or seemed to legalize the polygamy of the patriarchs!

6. *Except it be for fornication*—The decision of our Lord must be very unpleasant to these men: The reason why they wished to put away their wives was, that they might take others whom they liked better; but our Lord here declares, that they could not be re-married while the divorced person was alive, and that those who did marry, during the life of the di-

voiced, were adulterers; and heavy judgments were denounced, in their law, against such. In this discourse, our Lord shows that marriage, except in one case, is indissoluble, and should be so: (1.) By divine institution. (2.) By express commandment. (3.) Because the married couple become one and the same person. (4.) By the example of the first pair. And, (5.) Because of the evil consequent on separation.

7. *And if a woman shall put away her husband*—From this it appears, that, in some cases, the wife assumed the very same right of divorcing her husband that the husband had of divorcing his wife; and yet this is not recorded any where in the Jewish laws, as far as I can find, that the women had such a right. Indeed, were the law which gives the permission all on one side, it would be unjust and oppressive; but where it is equally balanced, the right being the same on each side, it must serve as a mutual check, and prevent those evils it is intended to cure.

8. *If the case of the man*—Our word "husband" comes from the Anglo-Saxon, "hus" and "band;" the bond of the house, anciently spelt "housebond." It is a lamentable case when the husband, instead of being the bond and union of the family, scatters and ruins it by dissipation, riot, and excess.

9. *It is not good to marry*—That is, if a man have not the liberty to put away his wife when she is displeasing to him. God had said, Genesis ii. 18, "It is not good for man to be alone;" that is, unmarried. The disciples seem to say, that if the husband have not the power to divorce his wife when she is displeasing to him, it is not good for him to marry. Here was a flat contradiction to the decision of the Creator. There are difficulties and trials in all states; but let marriage and celibacy be weighed fairly, and I am persuaded the former will be found to have fewer than the latter. However, before we enter into an engagement which nothing but death can dissolve, we had need to act cautiously, carefully consulting the will and word of God. Where an unbridled passion, or a base love of money, leads the way, marriage is sure to be miserable.

"This law of marriage no man is at liberty to break, and no legislature or state has the power to modify or alter. The bond is absolutely indissoluble in every case, but that by which the great Law-giver has dissolved it, the single case of adultery; so that marriage is a sacred, and not a mere civil, institution; and whatever laws are made respecting it must, to acquire any validity, be based upon the supreme law itself, and fully recognise it, in all its extent."—R. WATSON.

SECTION CLV.—JESUS CHRIST' BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XIX. 13—15; MARK X. 13—16;
LUKE XVIII. 15—17.

THEN were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands¹ on them, and pray: But when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked those that brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and called them *unto him*, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: For of such is the kingdom of God.² Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them up in his arms,³ put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them;⁴ and departed thence.

1. *That he should put his hands*—It was a common custom among the Jews to lay their hands on the heads of those whom they blessed, or for whom they prayed. This seems to have been done by way of dedication or consecration to God; the person being considered as the sacred property of God ever after. Often God added a testimony of his approbation, by communicating some extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. This rite has been long practised among Christians, when persons are appointed to any sacred office. But this consecration of children to God seems to have grown out of use. It is no wonder that the great mass of children are so wicked, when so few are put under the care of Christ by humble, praying, believing parents. Let every parent that fears God bring up his children in that fear; and, by baptism, let each be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Whatever is solemnly consecrated to God abides under his protection and blessing.

2. *Of such is the kingdom of God*—Or, “The kingdom of heaven is composed of such.” This appears to be the best sense of the passage, and utterly ruins the whole inhuman diabolic system of what is called “non-elect infants’ damnation;” a doctrine which must have sprung from Moloch, and can only be defended by a heart in which he dwells. A great part of God’s kingdom is composed of such, literally; and those only who resemble little children shall be received into it. Christ loves little children, because he loves simplicity and innocence; he has sanctified their very age by passing through it himself: The Holy Jesus was once a little child.

“That this kingdom signifies the spiritual kingdom of Christ upon earth, and also that glorious reign of God over redeemed and glorified men in a future world, are points not to be disputed; as to both it is to be observed, that children under the years of accountability are the subjects spoken of, and these alone. That all such stand in a spiritual relation to Christ as the Sovereign of the kingdom of heaven, the Head of this church, is proved from his own words; and that this relation is not merely a nominal, but a vital and beneficial, one, appears as clearly from his praying for them, putting his hands upon them, and blessing them;

all which, being acts of favour and acceptance, indicated their most certain heirship, through his merits and intercession,—should they die before forfeiture of this grace by personal actual offence,—to the felicities of immortal life in his perfected kingdom above. Thus this important passage satisfactorily proves the share which infants have in the mercies of the Redeemer, both in this and in a future life. How far it establishes a right to administer to them the ordinance of Christian baptism, is a distinct question. To this, however, it must be acknowledged, that infant-baptism bears an interesting correspondence. It recognises the previous grace and good-will of Christ to children; it is an act of piety, in which they are brought to Christ for his blessing; it is a standing public declaration of the interest which the infant part of the human race have in the atonement; it places parents under proper vows and responsibilities as to the religious education of their children; and if, by other arguments from holy writ, it is satisfactorily proved to have taken the place of circumcision, and to be properly a sacrament, it is not only a sign, but a seal, of the covenant of grace, granted for the comfort and encouragement of parents, and by which the full grace of that covenant is confirmed to their children as they are fitted to receive it; beside the advantage of a visible connexion with the Christian church, answering to that invisible connexion which, independent of any outward rite, they, in fact, enjoy by virtue of their federal union with its Head.”

—R. WATSON.

3. *And he took them up in his arms*—Jesus Christ loves little children; and they are objects of his most peculiar care. Who can account for their continual preservation and support, while exposed to so many dangers, but on the ground of a peculiar and extraordinary providence?

4. *And blessed them*—Them, though little children, they were capable of receiving Christ’s blessing. If Christ embraced them, why should not his church embrace them? Why not dedicate them to God by baptism? whether that be performed by sprinkling, washing, or immersion; for we need not dispute about the mode: On this point let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. I confess it appears to me

grossly heathenish and barbarous, to see parents who profess to believe in that Christ who loves children, and among them those whose creed does not prevent them from using infant baptism, depriving their children of an ordinance by which no soul can prove that they cannot be profited, and through an unaccountable bigotry or carelessness, withholding from them the privi-

lege of even a nominal dedication to God; and yet these very persons are ready enough to fly for a minister to baptize their child when they suppose it to be at the point of death! It would be no crime to pray that such persons should never have the privilege of hearing, "My father!" or, "My mother!" from the lips of their own child.

SECTION CLVI.—THE YOUNG RULER.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XIX. 16—30; MARK X. 17—31;
LUKE XVIII. 18—30.

AND when he was gone forth into the way, behold, a certain ruler came running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, saying, Good Master,¹ what good thing shall I do that, I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God: But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.² He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou knowest the commandments, Thou shalt do no murder,³ Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother: And, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.⁴ The young man answered and said unto him, Master, all these things have I kept from my youth up: What lack I yet? Now when Jesus heard these things, beholding him, *he* loved him, and said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: If thou wilt be perfect,⁵ go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: And come, take up the cross, and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he was very sorrowful, and went away grieved:⁶ For he was very rich, *and* had great possessions.⁷ And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter⁸ into the kingdom of heaven. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! And again I say unto you, 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. When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, *and* astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?⁹ But Jesus looking upon them saith, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. With men

this is impossible,¹⁰ but not with God: For with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all,¹¹ and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me,¹² in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, and for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive an hundredfold¹³ now in this present time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions;¹⁴ and in the world to come shall inherit everlasting life. But many *that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*¹⁵

1. *Good Master*—Much instruction may be had from seriously attending to the conduct, spirit, and question of this person: (1.) He came running; for he was deeply convinced of the importance of his business, and seriously determined to seek so as to find. (2.) He kneeled, or caught him by the knees, thus evidencing his humility, and addressing himself only to mercy. (3.) He came in the spirit of a disciple, or scholar, desiring to be taught a matter of the utmost importance to him: "Good Teacher." (4.) He came in the spirit of obedience; he had worked hard to no purpose, and he is still willing to work, provided he can have a prospect of succeeding: "What good thing shall I do?" (5.) His question was the most interesting and important that any soul can ask of God: "How shall I be saved?"

2. *Keep the commandments*—From this we may learn, that God's great design in giving his law to the Jews, was, to lead them to the expectation and enjoyment of eternal life. But as all the law referred to Christ, and he became the end of the law for righteousness (justification) to all that believe; so he is to be received, in order to have the end accomplished which the law proposed.

3. *Thou shalt do no murder, &c.*—But some say, "These commandments are not binding on us." Vain, deceived men! can a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and a liar enter into eternal life? No; the God

of purity and justice has forbidden it. "But we are not to keep these commandments in order to purchase eternal life." Right; neither Jesus Christ nor his genuine messengers say you are. To save your souls, Christ must save you from your sins, and enable you to walk before him in newness of life.

4. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*—Self-love, as it is generally called, has been grievously declaimed against, even by religious people, as a most pernicious and dreadful evil. But they have not understood the subject on which they spoke. They have denominated that intense propensity which unregenerate men feel to gratify their carnal appetites and vicious passions, self-love; whereas, it might be more properly termed self-hatred, or self-murder. If I am to love my neighbour as myself, and this "love worketh no ill to its neighbour," then self-love, in the sense in which our Lord uses it, is something excellent. It is properly a disposition essential to our nature, and inseparable from our being, by which we desire to be happy, by which we seek the happiness we have not, and rejoice in it when we possess it. In a word, it is a uniform wish of the soul to avoid all evil, and to enjoy all good. Therefore, he who is wholly governed by self-love, properly and scripturally speaking, will devote his whole soul to God, and earnestly and constantly seek all his peace, happiness, and salvation in the enjoyment of God. But

self-love cannot make me happy; I am only the subject which receives the happiness, but am not the object that constitutes this happiness; for it is that object, properly speaking, that I love; and love, not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of the happiness which I enjoy through it. "No man," saith the apostle, "ever hated his own flesh." But he that sinneth against God wrongeth his own soul, both of present and eternal salvation; and is so far from being governed by self-love, that he is the implacable enemy of his best and dearest interests in both worlds.

5. *If thou wilt be perfect*—To be complete, to have the business finished, and all hinderances to thy salvation removed; "go and sell that thou hast;" go and dispose of thy possessions; to which, it is evident, his heart was too much attached; "and give to the poor;" for thy goods will be a continual snare to thee if thou keep them; "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;" the loss, if it can be called such, shall be made amply up to thee in that eternal life about which thou inquierest. "And come and follow me;" be my disciple, and I will appoint thee to preach the kingdom of God to others. This was the usual "call" which Christ gave to his disciples; and it is pretty evident from this, that he intended to make him a preacher of his salvation. How many, by their attachment to filthy lucre, have lost the honour of becoming or continuing ambassadors for the Most High!

6. *And went away grieved*—Men undergo great agony of mind while they are in suspense between the love of the world and the love of their souls. When the first absolutely predominates, then they enjoy a factitious rest, through a false peace; when the latter has the upper hand, then they possess true tranquillity of mind, through that peace of God that passeth knowledge.

7. *Had great possessions*—And what were these in comparison of peace of conscience, and mental rest? Besides, he had unequivocal proof that these contributed nothing to his comfort, for he is now miserable, even while he possesses them. And so will every soul be who puts worldly good in the place of the supreme God.

8. *A rich man shall hardly enter, &c.*

—That is, into the spirit and privileges of the gospel in this world, and, through them, into the kingdom of glory. Earthly riches are a great obstacle to salvation, because it is almost impossible to possess them, and not to set the heart upon them; and they who love the world have not the love of the Father in them. To be rich, therefore, is, in general, a great misfortune. But what rich man can be convinced of this? It is only God himself who, by a miracle of mercy, can do this. Christ himself affirms the difficulty of the salvation of a rich man with an oath: "Verily." But who of the rich either hears or believes him?

9. *Who then can be saved?*—The question of the disciples seemed to intimate, that most people were rich, and that therefore scarcely any could be saved. They certainly must have attached a different meaning to what constitutes a rich man, to what we in general do. Who is a rich man in our Lord's sense of the word? This is a very important question, and has not, that I know of, been explicitly answered. A rich man, in my opinion, is not one who has so many hundreds or thousands more than some of his neighbours; but is one who gets more than is necessary to supply all his own wants, and those of his household, and keeps the residue still to himself, though the poor are starving through lack of the necessaries of life. In a word, he is a man who gets all he can, saves all he can, and keeps all he has gotten. Speak, reason; speak, conscience,—for God has already spoken,—can such a person enter into the kingdom of God? All, "No."

10. *With men this is impossible*—God alone can take the love of the world out of the human heart; therefore the salvation of the rich is represented as possible only to him; and, indeed, the words seem to intimate, that it requires more than common exertions of Omnipotence to save a rich man.

11. *We have forsaken all*—"A poor all," says one; "a parcel of rotten nets!" No matter; they were their all, whether rotten or sound; besides, they were the all they got their bread by, and such an all as was quite sufficient for that purpose; and let it be observed, that that man forsakes much who reserves nothing to himself, and

renounces all expectations from this world, taking God alone for his portion. To forsake all without following Christ, is the virtue of a philosopher; to follow Christ in profession without forsaking all, is the state of the generality of Christians; but to follow Christ and forsake all, is the perfection of a Christian.

12. *Ye which have followed me, &c.*—The regeneration is thus referred to the time when Jesus shall sit on the throne of his glory, and not to the time of following him; which is utterly improper.

13. *Receive an hundredfold*—Namely, in this life, in value, though perhaps not in kind; and in the world to come, everlasting life. A glorious portion for a persevering believer,—the fulness of grace here, and the fulness of glory hereafter.

Some have been greatly embarrassed to find out the literal truth of these promises; and some, in flat opposition to the text, have said they are all to be understood spiritually. But thus far is plain, that those who have left all for the sake of Christ, do find, among genuine Christians, spiritual relatives, which are as dear to them as fathers, mothers, &c.; yet they have the promise of receiving a hundred-fold often literally fulfilled; for wherever a Christian travels among Christians, the shelter of their houses, and the product of their lands, are at his service, as far as they are requisite. Besides, these words were spoken primarily to the disciples, and pointed out their itinerant manner of life; and how, travelling about from house to house, preaching the gospel of the grace of God, they should, among the followers of Christ, be provided with every thing necessary, in all places, as if the whole were their own. I have often remarked, that the genuine messengers of God, in the present day, have, as noted above, this promise literally fulfilled.

14. *With persecutions*—For while you meet with nothing but kindness from true Christians, you shall be despised, and often afflicted, by those who are enemies to God

and goodness; but, for your comfort, ye shall have in the “world to come,”—the coming world, that world which is on its way to meet you,—“eternal life.”

15. *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first*—The Jews, who have been the first and most distinguished people of God, will, in general, reject the gospel of my grace, and be consequently rejected by me. The Gentiles, who have had no name among the living, shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and become the first, the chief, and most exalted people of God. That this prediction of our Lord has been literally fulfilled, the present state of the Christian and Jewish churches sufficiently proves.

“The Christian church is ‘the Israel of God,’ and every believer is a son of Abraham. To have authority under Christ in this spiritual church, to convey immediately from him its doctrines and laws, to regulate its discipline and its services, to encourage the humble spirits by promises, to direct the perplexed by counsel, to excite the languid by exhortation, to restrain the vicious by rebukes, to exhibit, as the motives to submission and obedience to Christ, all the hopes of heaven, and all the terrors of future punishment, with an authority which they only possessed, and continue to possess to this day;—these were to be the rewards of the fishermen and publicans of Galilee, who had left all to follow Christ. And who of mankind have been raised to equal honour and influence? Where are the men whose names are so venerable, so often pronounced? Where the authority so often appealed to on all moral questions? Where the writings that lay such hold upon the consciences of men? And where the teachers who have trained up such an host of immortal beings to holiness here, and to a blissful immortality? And these their rewards will ever increase, until all the world shall acknowledge them, under Christ, to be their infallible guides, and the rulers of an universal church.”

—R. WATSON.

SECTION CLVII.—THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XX. 1—16.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received *it*, they murmured ¹ against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: ² Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me ³ to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: ⁴ For many be called,⁵ but few chosen.

1. *They murmured*—The Jews made the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles a pretence why they should reject that gospel; as they fondly imagined they were, and should be, the sole objects of the divine approbation.

2. *Friend, I do thee no wrong*—The salvation of the Gentiles can in itself become no impediment to the Jews; there is the same Jesus both for the Jew and for the Greek. Eternal life is offered to both through the blood of the cross; and there is room enough in heaven for all.

3. *Is it not lawful for me*—As eternal life is the free gift of God, he has a right to give it in whatever proportions, at whatever times, and on whatever conditions, he pleases.

The church is a vineyard, because it is a place of labour, where no man should be idle. Each of us is engaged to labour in this vineyard, to work out our salvation through him who worketh in us to will and to perform. Life is but a day, whereof childhood, or the first use of reason, is the day-break, or first hour, in which we receive

the first call: The promise of the kingdom of glory is given to all those who are workers together with him.

The second call is in the time of youth, which is most commonly idle, or only employed in dissipation and worldly cares:

"Young friends, be on your guard. The world smiles upon you; vanity presents a thousand varied allurements; and vice puts on the most imposing, the most seductive, blandishments, to draw you from the right way, and to plunge you into infamy and ruin. You are inexperienced; your imaginations are romantic; your passions are strong; and the examples with which you are unhappily surrounded invite to a contempt, or, at least, to a negligence, of the things which appertain to God, and the salvation of your soul. Be on your guard; we repeat the admonition; for, in all probability, the course you now take, the conduct you now adopt, will fix your character for life, and perhaps your destiny for ever."—BROMLEY.

"A young tree may more easily be taken up, and transplanted, than an old oak, which hath spread its root deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit of sin, the harder the alteration of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave, to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and a bond of iniquity; and the more new chains are put upon these, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. Satan will be diligent to keep up his own work; the longer his possession, the more difficult his departure."—CHARNOCK.

The third call is at the age of manhood:

"What! though the powers of the mind are in their maturity, in too many instances they seem matured, only to be foolishly or wickedly employed; and the meridian of life is too often clouded by the neglect of religion, and by the practice of wrong."—

BROMLEY.

The fourth, in the decline of life.

The fifth, when sickness and the infirmities of life press upon us. How many are there in the world who are just ready to leave it, before they properly consider for what end they were brought into it! Still idle, still unemployed in the things which concern their souls; though eternal life is offered to them, and hell moving from beneath to meet them!

4. *So the last shall be first, and the first last*—The Gentiles, who have been long without the true God, shall now enjoy all the privileges of the new covenant; and the Jews, who have enjoyed these from the beginning, shall now be dispossessed of them; for, because they have rejected the Lord, he also hath rejected them.

5. *Many be called, &c.*—Many are called by the preaching of the gospel, but few are found who use their advantages in such a way as to become extensively useful in the church; and many in the church militant behave so ill as never to be admitted into the church triumphant. But what a mercy, that those who appear now to be rejected may be called in another muster, enrolled, serve in the field, or work in the vineyard! How many millions does the long-suffering of God lead to repentance!

SECTION CLVIII.—THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XI. 1—15.

Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.¹ When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death,² but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.³ When he

had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? ⁴ If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: And after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; ⁵ but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: But they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, ⁶ to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

1. *He whom thou lovest is sick*—Nothing could be more simple, nor more modest, than this prayer: They do not say, "Come and heal him:" Or, "Command the disease to depart even where thou art, and it will obey thee." They content themselves with simply stating the case, and using an indirect but a most forcible argument, to induce our Lord to show forth his power and goodness. "He is sick," and "thou lovest" him; therefore thou canst neither abandon him nor us.

2. *This sickness is not unto death*—Not to final privation of life at this time; but a temporary death shall be now permitted, that the glory of God may appear in the miracle of his resurrection. It is very likely that this verse contains the message which Christ sent back, by the person whom the afflicted sisters had sent to him; and this, no doubt, served much to strengthen their confidence, though their faith must have been greatly exercised by the death of their brother: For when this took place, though they buried him, yet they believed, even then, probably on the ground of this message, that Jesus might raise him from the dead.

3. *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*—Therefore his staying two days longer in Bethabara was not through lack of affection for this distressed family, but merely that he might have a more favourable opportunity of proving to them how much he loved them. Christ

never denies a less favour, but in order to confer a greater. God's delays, in answering prayers offered to him by persons in distress, are often proofs of his purpose to confer some great kindness; and they are also proofs that his wisdom finds it necessary to permit an increase of the affliction, that his goodness may be more conspicuous in its removal.

4. *Are there not twelve hours in the day?*—Life is the time to fulfil the will of God, and to prepare for glory. Jesus is the light of the world; he that walks in his Spirit, and by his direction, cannot stumble, cannot fall into sin, nor be surprised by an unexpected death. But he who walks in the night, in the darkness of his own heart, and according to the maxims of this dark world, stumbles, falls into sin, and at last falls into hell. Reader, do not dream of walking to heaven in the night of thy death. God has given thee the warning; receive it, and begin to live to him, and for eternity.

5. *Lazarus sleepeth*—It was very common among the Jews to express death by sleep; and the expressions, "falling asleep," "sleeping with their fathers," &c., were in great use among them.

6. *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there*—"I tell you plainly, Lazarus is dead; and I am glad I was not there. If I had been, I should have been prevailed on to have healed him almost as soon as he fell sick, and I should not have had so

striking an occasion to manifest the glory of God to you, and to establish you in the faith." It was a miracle, to discover that Lazarus was dead, as no person had come to announce it. It was a greater miracle, to raise a dead man, than to cure a sick man. And it was a still greater miracle, to raise one that was three or four days buried, and in whose body putrefaction might have begun to take place, than to raise one that was but newly dead.

"Thus Jesus, who could have raised Lazarus from the dead without opening his lips, or rising from his seat, leaves the

place of his retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a long journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him. The reason was, his being present in person, and raising Lazarus to life again, before so many witnesses at Bethany, where he died, and was well known, would be the means of bringing the men of that and future ages to believe in him and his doctrine, which is so well fitted to prepare mankind for a resurrection to eternal life, an admirable proof and emblem of which he gave them in this great miracle."—LARDNER.

SECTION CLIX.—THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XI. 16—46.

THEN said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.¹ Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already.² Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: ³ But Mary sat *still* in the house.⁴ Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.⁵ But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection ⁶ at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: ⁷ He that believeth in me, though he were dead,⁸ yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.⁹ Believest thou this? ¹⁰ She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe¹¹ that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come,¹² and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was

come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit,¹³ and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.¹⁴ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! ¹⁵ And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes¹⁶ of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.¹⁷ Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: For he hath been *dead* four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee¹⁸ that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: But because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice,¹⁹ Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: And his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.²⁰ Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.²¹ But some of them went their ways²² to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

1. *Let us also go, that we may die with him*—That is, Seeing we cannot dissuade our Lord from going, and his death is likely to be the inevitable consequence, let us give him the fullest proof we can of our love, by going and suffering death with him.

2. *He had lain in the grave four days already*—Our Lord probably left Bethabara the day, or the day after, Lazarus died. He came to Bethany three days after; and it appears that Lazarus had been buried about four days, and consequently that he had been put in the grave the day, or day after, he died.

3. *Martha went and met him*—Some suppose she was the eldest of the two sisters; she seems to have had the management of the house.

4. *Mary sat still in the house*—It is

likely that by this circumstance the evangelist intended to convey the idea of her sorrow and distress; because anciently afflicted persons were accustomed to put themselves in this posture, as expressive of their distress; their grief having rendered them as it were immovable.

5. *If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*—Mary said the same words to him a little after, which proves that these sisters had not a complete knowledge of the omnipotence of Christ: They thought he could cure at hand, but not at a distance; or they thought that it was because he did not know of their brother's indisposition that he permitted him to die. In either of these cases it plainly appears they had not a proper notion of his Divinity; and, indeed, the following verse proves that they considered him in no other light

than that of a prophet. Query—Was it not proper that Christ should, in general, as much as might be, hide the knowledge of his Divinity from those with whom he ordinarily lodged? Had they known him fully, would not the reverence and awe connected with such a knowledge have overwhelmed them?

6. *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection*—The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was then commonly received; and though it was our Lord who fully exemplified it by his own resurrection, yet the opinion was common, not only among God's people, but among all those who believed in the God of Israel.

7. *I am the resurrection, and the life*—Thou sayest that thy brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day; but by whom shall he arise if not by me, who am the Author of the resurrection, and the Source of life? And is it not as easy for me to raise him now as to raise him then? Thus our blessed Lord raises her hope, animates her faith, and teaches her, that he was not a mere man, but the essential principle and author of existence.

8. *Though he were dead*—Every man who has believed or shall believe in me, though his believing shall not prevent him from dying a natural death, yet his body shall be re-animated, and he shall live with me in an eternal glory. And every one who is now dead, dead to God, dead in trespasses and sins, if he believe in me, trust on me as his sole Saviour, "he shall live;" shall be quickened by my Spirit, and live a life of faith, working by love.

9. *Shall never die*—Or, "shall not die for ever." Though he die a temporal death, he shall not continue under its power for ever; but shall have a resurrection to life eternal.

10. *Believest thou this?*—God has determined to work in the behalf of men only in proportion to their faith in him: It was necessary, therefore, that these persons should be well-instructed concerning his nature, that they might find no obstacles to their faith. These sisters had considered him only as a prophet hitherto; and it was necessary that they should now be farther instructed, that, as God was to exert himself, they might believe that God was there.

11. *Yea, Lord: I believe*—Martha here acknowledges Christ for the Messiah promised to their fathers; but her faith goes no farther; and, having received some hope of her brother's present resurrection, she waited for no farther instruction, but ran to call her sister.

12. *The Master is come*—This was the appellation which he had in the family; and from these words it appears that Christ had inquired for Mary, desiring to have her present, that he might strengthen her faith, previously to his raising her brother.

13. *He groaned in the spirit, &c.*—Here the blessed Jesus shows himself to be truly man. It is abolishing one of the finest traits in our Lord's human character, to say that he wept and mourned here because of sin and its consequences. No; Jesus had humanity in its perfection; and humanity unadulterated is generous and sympathetic. A particular friend of Jesus was dead; and, as his friend, the affectionate soul of Christ was troubled, and he mingled his sacred tears with those of the afflicted relatives. Behold the man, in his deep, heart-felt trouble, and in his flowing tears! But when he says, "Lazarus, come forth!" behold the God! and the God, too, of infinite clemency, love, and power. Can such a Jesus refuse to comfort the distressed, or save the lost? Can he restrain his mercies from the penitent soul, or refuse to hear the yearnings of his own bowels? Can such a character be inattentive to the welfare of his creatures? Here is God manifested in the flesh! living in human nature, feeling for the distressed, and suffering for the lost! Reader, ask thy soul, ask thy heart, ask the bowels of thy compassions, if thou hast any, "Could this Jesus unconditionally reprobate from eternity any soul of man?" Thou answerest, "No!" God repeats, "No!" Universal nature re-echoes, "No!" and the tears and blood of Jesus eternally say, "No!"

14. *Jesus wept*—The least verse in the Bible, yet inferior to none. Some of the ruthless ancients, improperly styled fathers of the church, thought that weeping was a degradation of the character of Christ; and therefore razed out of the Gospel of St. Luke the place where Christ is said to have wept over Jerusalem.

15. *Behold how he loved him!*—And when we see him pouring out his blood and life upon the cross for mankind, we may, with exultation and joy, cry out, "Behold how he hath loved us!"

16. *Could not this man, which opened the eyes, &c.*—Through the maliciousness of their hearts, these Jews considered the tears of Jesus as a proof of his weakness. We may suppose them to have spoken thus: "If he loved him so well, why did he not heal him? And if he could have healed him, why did he not do it, seeing he testifies so much sorrow at his death? Let none hereafter vaunt the miracle of the blind man's cure; if he had been capable of doing that, he would not have permitted his friend to die." Thus will men reason, or rather madden, concerning the works and providence of God; till, by his farther miracles of mercy or judgment, he converts or confounds them.

17. *Take ye away the stone*—He desired to convince all those who were at the place, and especially those who took away the stone, that Lazarus was not only dead, but that putrescency had already taken place, that it might not be afterwards said, that Lazarus had only fallen into a lethargy; but that the greatness of the miracle might be fully evinced.

18. *Father, I thank thee*—As it was a common opinion, that great miracles might be wrought by the power and in the name of the devil, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and invoked the supreme God before these unbelieving Jews, that they might see that it was by his power, and by his only, that this miracle was done; that every hinderance to this people's faith might be completely taken out of the way; and that their faith might stand, not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of the Most High. On this account our Lord says, he spoke because of the multitude, that they might see there was no diabolic influence here, and that God in his mercy had visited this people.

19. *He cried with a loud voice*—In John v. 26, our Lord had said, that "the time was coming, in which the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." He now fulfils that prediction, and cries aloud, that the people may take notice, and see that even

death is subject to the sovereign command of Christ.

"At his potent call, Lazarus came forth; the grave surrendered its prey, and this beloved, this favoured, family once more assembled in their Saviour's presence. What a family interview was that! what strange greetings! what rapturous congratulations! what joys unfelt before, did that hour witness! Such a family interview, at any time, and in any place, must have been wonderful; but the finish in this picture of happiness, the first ingredient in this cup of felicity, was the presence of Jesus! All other pleasures were exalted, sanctified, and outdone by this!"
—BROMLEY.

20.—*Loose him, and let him go*—He would have the disciples and those who were at hand take part in this business, that the fullest conviction might rest on every person's mind concerning the reality of what was wrought. He whom the grace of Christ converts and restores to life comes forth, at his call, from the dark, dismal grave of sin, in which his soul has long been buried: He walks, according to the command of Christ, in newness of life; and gives, by the holiness of his conduct, the fullest proof to all his acquaintance that he is alive from the dead.

21. *Many of the Jews believed on him*—They saw that the miracle was incontestable; and they were determined to resist the truth no longer. Their friendly visit to these distressed sisters became the means of their conversion. How true is the saying of the wise man, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting!" God never permits men to do any thing, through a principle of kindness to others, without making it instrumental of good to themselves. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." Therefore, let no man withhold good, while it is in the power of his hand to do it.

22. *But some of them went their ways*—Astonishing! Some that had seen even this miracle steeled their hearts against it; and not only so, but conspired the destruction of this most humane, amiable, and glorious Saviour! Those who obstinately resist the truth of God are capable of every thing that is base, perfidious, and cruel. Christ's sympathy and tenderness

have already been noted. His eternal power and Godhead are sufficiently manifested in the resurrection of Lazarus. The whole chapter abounds with great and important truths, delivered in language the most impressive and edifying. In the whole of our Lord's conduct in the affair of Lazarus and his sisters, we find majesty, humanity, friendship, and sublime devotion, blended in the most intimate manner, and illustrating each other by their respective

splendour and excellence. In every act, in every word, we see God manifested in the flesh: Man, in all the amiableness and charities of his nature; God, in the plenitude of his power and goodness. How sublime is the lesson of instruction conveyed by the words, "Jesus wept!" The heart that feels them not must be in the "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," and consequently lost to every generous feeling.

SECTION CLX.—THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE SANHEDRIM.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XI. 47—57.

THEN gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him:¹ And the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider² that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people,³ and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself,⁴ but being high priest⁵ that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only,⁶ but that also he should gather together in one⁶ the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: And many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him.

1. *All men will believe on him*—If we permit him to work but a few more miracles like these two last,—the cure of the blind man, and the resurrection of Lazarus,—he will be universally acknowledged for the Messiah; the people will proclaim him

king; and the Romans, who can suffer no government here but their own, will be so irritated, that they will send their armies against us, destroy our temple, and utterly dissolve our civil and ecclesiastical existence. Thus, under the pretence of the

public good, these men of blood hide their hatred against Christ, and resolve to put him to death. To get the people on their side, they must give the alarm of destruction to the nation: If this man be permitted to live, we shall be all destroyed. Their former weapons will not now avail. On the subject of keeping the sabbath, they had been already confounded; and his last miracles were so incontestable, that they could no longer cry out, "He is a deceiver."

2. *Nor consider*—Ye talk more at random than according to reason, and the exigencies of the case.

3. *That one man should die for the people*—In saying these remarkable words, Caiaphas had no other intention than merely to state, that it was better to put Jesus to death, than to expose the whole nation to ruin on his account. His maxim was, "It is better to sacrifice one man than a whole nation." In politics nothing could be more just than this; but there are two words to be spoken to it: (1.) The religion of God says, "We must not do evil that good may come." (2.) It is not certain that Christ will be acknowledged as king by all the people; nor that he will make any insurrection against the Romans; nor that the Romans will, on this account, ruin the temple, the city, and the nation: This, Caiaphas should have considered; a person should be always sure of his premises before he attempts to draw any conclusion from them.

4. *This spake he not of himself*—Wicked and worthless as he was, God so guided his tongue, that, contrary to his intention, he pronounced a prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ. I have already remarked, that the doctrine of a vicarious atonement had gained, long before this time, universal credit in the world.

As Caiaphas was high priest, his opinion was of most weight with the council; therefore God put these words into his mouth, rather than into the mouth of any other of its members. It was a maxim among the Jews, that no prophet ever knew the purport of his own prophecy, Moses and Isaiah excepted. They were, in general, organs, by which God chose to speak.

5. *And not for that nation only, &c.*—These and the preceding words in verse 51, are John's explication of what was

prophetic in the words of Caiaphas; as if John had said, "He is indeed to die for the sins of the Jewish nation; but not for theirs alone, but for the sins of the whole world."

6. *Gather together in one*—That he should collect into one body; form one church out of the Jewish and Gentile believers.

"There is something more important to be contemplated in the death of Christ than simply the notion of martyrdom, in defence of the truths which he taught. It speaks to justice; and justice, to personify such perfection, lends an ear to its proposals, yields to its earnest solicitations, acknowledges its efficacy, and unlooses its grasp of the penitent sinner. The hand which was upon the sacred person of the Redeemer, by which he was smitten to the ground in the garden, and under which he was bruised, while bleeding and agonizing, would have fallen with a weight more terrible than the bolt of heaven, more fatal than the lightning's scorching heat, upon a world of sinners, had he not thus interposed, and so broken the fall; taking his position, so to speak, between the load of wrath from above, and the heirs of wrath beneath.

"It speaks to mercy; and mercy, listening, sheds her brightest beams. The sun, though invariably the same, whether visible or invisible to the eye, shines, nevertheless, when once unveiled to this lower world, with the greatest splendour at noon. Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, through whom every ray of light, every beam of mercy, is conveyed from heaven to earth, was shrouded behind a cloud of types, shadows, and ceremonies, under the Old Testament dispensation; but when manifested in the flesh, it was then that the orb, which was concealed behind the cloud to the Jew, stood before it to the Christian, the shadows having been all thrown into the rear. And various as the manifestations of mercy were, both under the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic dispensations, and even up to the moment that Jesus ascended Calvary, they were little more than the first faint dawns of the morning light, "shining more and more to the perfect day." That day, that perfect day,—strange to tell!—was when Christ hung upon the cross, when darkness covered all the land.

This has been properly denominated 'the noon-tide of everlasting love, the meridian splendour of eternal mercy.' All that Jesus Christ did and suffered, was out of the purest love to man; and had not something stronger than the nails transixed him to the cross, he would never have continued there. It was love, love cemented with blood, blood speaking to the ear, penetrating the eye, and melting, to still greater tenderness, the heart of mercy. Justice appears more terrible than if mercy had

been excluded; and mercy more amiable than if justice had been dispensed with; a violated law is magnified and made honourable. Justice, mercy, wisdom, in all their infinitude, mingle their beams, and shine with united splendour, no one eclipsing the other, but each adding a lustre to the rest; each, in its place, proclaiming the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor; for no where does justice appear so dreadful, mercy so engaging, wisdom so profound."—EVERETT.

SECTION CLXI.—CHRIST AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XX. 17—19; MARK X. 32—34;
LUKE XVIII. 31—34.

AND they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: And they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again *unto him* the twelve disciples apart in the way, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished: And the Son of Man shall be betrayed¹ and delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock and spitefully entreat him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him, and crucify *him*:² And the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things:³ And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

1. *The Son of Man shall be betrayed*—Or, "will be delivered up." This is the third time that our Lord informed his disciples of his approaching sufferings and death. This was a subject of the utmost importance, and it was necessary they should be well prepared for such an awful event.

2. *Shall scourge and crucify him*—This was done by Pilate, the Roman governor. The punishment of the cross was Roman, not Jewish; but the chief priests condemned him to it, and the Romans executed the sentence. How little did they know that they were, by this process, jointly offering up that sacrifice which was to make an atone-

ment for the Gentiles and for the Jews; an atonement for the sin of the whole world! How often may it be literally said, "The wrath of man shall praise thee!"

"What stronger proof can we have that the death of Christ was voluntary? and if voluntary, it was then vicarious. How many particulars are here predicted! (1.) That he should be betrayed; (2.) Into the hands, not of the Roman governor, but of the chief priests and scribes, composing the great council; (3.) That they should condemn him to death, under their law, as a blasphemer; yet, (4.) That they should not stone him, which was the Mosaic punishment, but should deliver him to the

Gentiles, the Romans, to mock and to scourge, and to spit upon, and to crucify; all which circumstances were most accurately fulfilled; (5.) That on the third day he should rise again."—R. WATSON.

"He died, because no inferior being could bring salvation. No humbler offering could appease that justice which required an infinite atonement: No lesser obedience could procure that bliss, which is sempiternal. If the sacrifice of a prophet or an apostle, of an angel or an archangel, of cherubim or seraphim, had blazed upon the altar of justice, it would not have been efficient; it would have been the oblation of a finite, a dependent, creature, and would have been worth nothing."—H. S. BOYD.

3. *They understood none of these things*—Notwithstanding all the information which Christ had given them concerning this awful subject, they could not as yet fully comprehend how the Messiah should

suffer; or how their Master, whose power they knew was unlimited, should permit the Jews and Gentiles to torment and slay him, as he here intimates they would.

"But let it not be imagined by any, that the mere existence of the sacrifice does itself secure the remission, and absolve from the consequences, of sin and that no work is necessary on the mind of the transgressor. You must be convinced of the infinite evil of sin; you must be convinced of your own deep participation in its pollution and guilt; you must be convinced of your danger for futurity, and your urgent need of such a redemption as that which the gospel proposes; and, connected with such convictions, you must receive from the heart the testimony given concerning the propitiation of the Saviour, and, renouncing all other refuge, depend and rest on him for the spiritual blessings leading to life and immortality."—J. PARSONS.

SECTION CLXII.—THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XX. 20—28; MARK X. 35—45.

THEN came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him; saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask:¹ Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they say unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give,² but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeas'd³ with James and John; and they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them;

and their great ones exercise authority upon them.⁴ But so shall it not be among you: But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.⁶

1. *Ye know not what ye ask*—How strange is the infatuation, in some parents, which leads them to desire worldly or ecclesiastical honours for their children! He must be much in love with the cross who wishes to have his child a minister of the gospel; for, if he be such as God approves of in the work, his life will be a life of toil and suffering; he will be obliged to sip, at least, if not to drink largely, of the cup of Christ. We know not what we ask, when, in getting our children into the church, we take upon ourselves to answer for their call to the sacred office, and for the salvation of the souls that are put under their care. Blind parents! rather let your children beg their bread than thrust them into an office to which God has not called them; and in which they will not only ruin their souls, but be the means of damnation to hundreds; for, if God has not sent them, they shall not profit the people at all.

2. *Is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father*—The common translation, in which the words, "It shall be given to them," are interpolated by our translators, utterly changes and destroys the meaning of the passage. It represents Christ, in opposition to the whole scriptures, as having nothing to do in the dispensing of rewards and punishments; whereas, our Lord only intimates that, however partial he may be to these two brethren, yet seats in glory can only be given to those who are fitted for them. No favour can prevail here; the elevated seat is for him who is filled with the fulness of God. The true construction of the words is this: "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, except to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

3. *When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased*—The ambition which leads to spiritual lordship is one great

cause of murmurings and animosities in religious societies, and has proved the ruin of the most flourishing churches in the universe.

4. *And their great ones exercise authority upon them*—The government of the church of Christ is widely different from secular governments. It is founded in humility and brotherly love; it is derived from Christ, the great Head of the church, and is ever conducted by his maxims and spirit. When political matters are brought into the church of Christ, both are ruined. The church has more than once ruined the state; the state has often corrupted the church: It is certainly for the interests of both to be kept separate. This has already been abundantly exemplified in both cases, and will continue so to be, over the whole world, wherever the church and state are united in secular matters.

5. *Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all*—From these directions of our Lord, we may easily discern what sort of a spirit his ministers should be of: (1.) A minister of Christ is not to consider himself a lord over Christ's flock. (2.) He is not to conduct the concerns of the church with an imperious spirit. (3.) He is to reform the weak, after Christ's example, more by loving instruction than by reproof or censure. (4.) He should consider that true apostolic greatness consists in serving the followers of Christ with all the powers and talents he possesses. (5.) That he should be ready, if required, to "give up his life unto death," to promote the salvation of men.

6. *To give his life a ransom for many*—"The doctrine of the atonement, the great foundation and top-stone of the Christian system, is here most clearly laid down. That which was given by Christ was his life, upon that great principle which runs through all the dispensations of revealed religion, that, without the shedding of

blood, there is no remission : That which man had forfeited by his sin was life ; ' for the wages of sin is death ; ' and that which alone could free him from this penalty was the substitution of a nobler life in place of his own, to which all the sacrifices of animal life under the patriarchal and Mosaic dis-

penations looked forward as instituted types. Christ is said to ' give ' his life ; which not only intimates that his sufferings and death were voluntarily undergone, but that he had a power over the disposal of his life, which no merely human being is invested with."—R. WATSON.

SECTION CLXIII.—TWO BLIND MEN HEALED AT JERICO.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XX. 29—34 ; MARK X. 46—52 ;
LUKE XVIII. 35—43.

AND as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, two blind men,¹ *the one* Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging : And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth *who* passed by, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me. *Yea, they both* cried out,² saying, Have mercy on us,³ O Lord, *thou* Son of David. And the multitude which went before rebuked them ;⁴ and many charged him, that he should hold his peace : But they cried the more⁵ a great deal, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David : *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood⁶ still, and commanded them to be called, *and* brought unto him : And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment,⁷ rose, and came to Jesus. And when he was come near, Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do⁸ unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight : They say, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.⁹ So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes ; and said unto him, Receive thy sight, *and* go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God : And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise unto God.¹⁰

1. *Two blind men*—Mark and Luke mention only one blind man, Bartimeus. Probably he was mentioned by the other evangelists, as being a person well known before and after his cure. Blindness of heart is a disorder of which men seldom complain, or from which they desire to be

delivered ; and it is one property of this blindness, to keep the person from perceiving it, and to persuade him that his sight is good.

" Bodily calamities are easily felt, and bodily welfare easily desired ; but though Christ most values those who prefer spiritual

mercies, yet he hath compassion also on men's bodies, as serviceable to their souls, and to his glory."—BAXTER.

2. *Cried out*—In the midst of judgments God remembers mercy. Though God had deprived them, for wise reasons, of their eyes, he left them the use of their speech. It is never ill with us, but it might be much worse: Let us, therefore, be submissive and thankful.

3. *Have mercy on us*—Hearing that Jesus passed by, and not knowing whether they should ever again have so good an opportunity of addressing him, they are determined to call, and call earnestly. They ask for mercy, conscious that they deserve nothing, and they ask with faith—"Son of David," acknowledging him as the promised Messiah.

4. *The multitude rebuked them*—Whenever a soul begins to cry after Jesus for light and salvation, the world and the devil join together to drown its cries, or force it to be silent. But let all such remember, Jesus is now passing by; that their souls must perish everlastingly, if not saved by him, and they may never have so good an opportunity again. While there is a broken and a contrite heart, let it sigh its complaints to God, till he hear and answer.

5. *They cried the more*—When the world and the devil begin to rebuke, in this case, it is a proof that the salvation of God is nigh; therefore, let such cry out a great deal the more.

6. *Jesus stood*—"The cry of a believing penitent," says one, "is sufficient to stop the most merciful Jesus, were he going to make a new heaven and a new earth; for what is all the irrational part of God's creation in worth, when compared with the value of one immortal soul?"

7. *And he, casting away his garment*—If every penitent were as ready to throw aside his self-righteousness and sinful incumbrances, as this blind man was to throw aside his garment, we should have fewer delays in conversions than we now have; and all that have been convinced of sin would have been brought to the knowledge of the truth.

8. *What wilt thou that I should do*—Christ is at all times infinitely willing to save sinners: When the desire of the heart is turned towards him, there can be little

delay in the salvation. "What is thy wish?" If it be a good one, God will surely fulfil it.

9. *That our eyes may be opened*—He who feels his own sore, and the plague of his heart, has no great need of a prompter in prayer. A hungry man can easily ask bread; he has no need to go to a book to get expressions to state his wants in; his hunger tells him he wants food, and he tells this to the person from whom he expects relief. Helps to devotion, in all ordinary cases, may be of great use; in extraordinary cases they can be of little importance; the afflicted heart alone can tell its own sorrows, with appropriate pleadings.

Reader, whosoever thou art, act in behalf of thy soul as these blind men did in behalf of their sight, and thy salvation is sure. Apply to the Son of David; lose not a moment; he is passing by, and thou art passing into eternity, and probably will never have a more favourable opportunity than the present. The Lord increase thy earnestness and faith!

10. *And all the people gave praise unto God*—They saw the finger of God in what was done; and they gave him that praise which was due to his name. The Pharisees either saw not, or would not acknowledge this. The common people are often better judges of the work of God than the doctors themselves. They are more simple, are not puffed up with the pride of learning, and are less liable to be warped, by prejudice or self-interest. Happy are those spiritually blind persons, to whom Christ has given eyes, that they may know him; feet, that they may follow him; a tongue, that they may praise him; and a heart, that they may love him! A true conversion, which no way contradicts itself, but is followed by an edifying life, makes known the majesty and power of God in a more eminent manner than the greatest external miracles.

This very remarkable cure gives us another proof, not only of the sovereign power, but of the benevolence, of Christ; nor do we ever see that sovereign power used, but in the way of benevolence. How slow is God to punish! how prone to spare! To his infinite benevolence, can it be any gratification to destroy any of the

children of men? No! We must take great heed not to attribute to his sovereignty, acts which are inconsistent with his benevolence and mercy. I am afraid this is a prevailing error; and that it is not confined to any religious party exclusively.

SECTION CLXIV.—THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIX. 1—10.

AND *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, *there was* a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see *Jesus* who he was; ¹ and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, ² and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: For he was to pass that way. And when *Jesus* came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; ³ for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁴ And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold. ⁵ And *Jesus* said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, ⁶ forso-much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

1. *And he sought to see Jesus who he was*—So the mere principle of curiosity in him led to his conversion and salvation, and to that of his whole family.

2. *He ran before*—The shortness of his stature was amply compensated by his agility and invention. Had he been as tall as the generality of the crowd, he might have been equally unnoticed with the rest. His getting into the tree made him conspicuous: Had he not been so low of stature, he would not have done so. Even the imperfections of our persons may become subservient to the grace of God in our eternal salvation.

“When this ‘Sun of Righteousness arose with healing under his wings,’ the populace, who lay all neglected and forlorn, benighted with ignorance and benumbed with vice, saw the light, and hailed the brightness of its rising. Up they sprang, and after him in multitudes, men, women,

and children, went. Was he to pass a road, they climbed the trees to see him; yea, the blind sat by the way-side to hear him go by. Was he in a house, they unroofed the building to come at him. As if they could never get near enough to hear the soft accents of his voice, they pressed, they crowded, they trod upon one another, to surround him. When he retired into the wilderness, they thought him another Moses, and would have made him a king.”

—CLAUDE.

3. *Make haste, and come down*—With this invitation, our blessed Lord conveyed heavenly influence to his heart; hence he was disposed to pay the most implicit and cheerful obedience to the call, and thus he received not the grace of God in vain.

“Zaccheus came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being noticed by

Christ. That was an honour too great, and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. Observe how Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and out-did his expectations; and see how he encourages very weak beginnings, and helps them forward. He that desires to know Christ shall be known of him: He that only desires to see him shall be admitted to converse with him."—BENSON.

4. *Received him joyfully*—He had now seen who he was, and he wished to hear what he was; and therefore he rejoiced in the honour that God had now conferred upon him. How often does Christ make the proposal of lodging, not only in our house, but in our heart, without its being accepted? We lose much, because we do not attend to the visitations of Christ. He passes by, he blesses our neighbours and our friends; but, often, neither curiosity

nor any other motive is sufficient to induce us to go even to the house of God, to hear of the miracles of mercy which he works in behalf of those who seek him.

5. *I restore him fourfold*—This restitution the Roman laws obliged the tax-gatherers to make, when it was proved they had abused their power by oppressing the people. But here was no such proof: The man, to show the sincerity of his conversion, does it of his own accord. He who has wronged his fellow must make restitution, if he have it in his power. He that does not do so cannot expect the mercy of God.

6. *To this house*—"To this very house" or "family." As if he had said, "If he be a sinner, he stands in the greater need of salvation, and 'the Son of Man is come to seek and save what was lost;' and therefore to save this lost soul is a part of my errand into the world."

SECTION CLXV.—THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XIX. 11—28.

AND as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman¹ went into a far country² to receive for himself a kingdom,³ and to return.⁴ And he called his ten servants,⁵ and delivered them ten pounds,⁶ and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens⁷ hated him,⁸ and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.⁹ And it came to pass, that when he was returned,¹⁰ having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.¹¹ And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound,¹² which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: Thou

takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow : Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath, shall be given ;¹³ and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

IN the following parable there are two distinct morals intended ; let it be viewed in these two points of light : (1.) The behaviour of the citizens to the nobleman ; and, (2.) The behaviour of his own servants to him.

(1.) By the behaviour of the citizens, and their punishment, we are taught that the Jews, who were the people of Christ, would reject him, and try to prevent his reigning over them in his spiritual kingdom ; and would, for that crime, be severely punished, by the destruction of their state. And this moral is all that answers to the introductory words, " And they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

(2.) The other moral extends itself through the whole of the parable, namely, that the disciples of Christ, who are his servants, and who made a good improvement of the favours granted them by the gospel, should be rewarded in proportion to the improvement made under the means of grace.

1. *A certain nobleman*—The Lord Jesus, who was shortly to be crucified by the Jews.

2. *Went into a far country*—Ascended to the right hand of the Divine Majesty.

3. *To receive a kingdom*—To take possession of the mediatorial kingdom, the right to which, as Messiah, he had acquired by his sufferings.

4. *And to return*—To judge and punish the rebellious Jews.

5. *And he called his ten servants*—All those who professed to receive his doctrine.

6. *Ten pounds*—By the ten *minas* given to each, we may understand the gospel of the kingdom given to every person who professes to believe in Christ ; and which he is to improve to the salvation of his soul. The same word is given to all, that all may believe and be saved.

7. *His citizens*—Or " countrymen," the Jewish people, who professed to be subjects of the kingdom of God.

8. *Hated him*—Despised him for the meanness of his birth, his crucifixion to the world, and for the holiness of his doctrine. Neither mortification nor holiness suits the dispositions of the carnal mind.

9. *We will not have this man, &c.*—The Jews rejected Jesus Christ, would not submit to his government, and, a short time after this, preferred even a murderer to him. Like cleaves to like : No wonder that those who murdered the Lord of glory should prefer a murderer, one of their own temper, to the Redeemer of their souls.

10. *When he was returned*—When he came to punish the disobedient Jews ; and when he shall come to judge the world.

11. *Over ten cities*—This is to be understood as referring to the new kingdom which the nobleman had just received. His former trustee and most faithful servants he now represents as being made governors, under him, over a number of

cities, according to the capacity he found in each; which capacity was known by the improvement of the *minus*.

12. *Here is thy pound.*—"The world promiseth temporal and small things, and is served with great eagerness: God promiseth high and eternal things, and the hearts of men are unmoved. Who is he that serveth and obeyeth God with such care as the world and the lords of it are served with? Blush, O Sidon, saith the sea; and if thou ask the cause, hear it: For a little money a long journey is undertaken; for everlasting life, many will scarce lift a foot from the ground. A thing of small value is sought after greedily; for the slight hope of a trifle, men cease not to toil day and night. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour, and everlasting glory, they are loath to take the least pains. Blush, therefore, slothful and complaining servant, that they are more eager for destruction than thou art for life."—**KEMPIS.**

13. *Unto every one which hath, shall be given, &c.*—"Men frequently deceive themselves,—and the delusion is specious,—by supposing, if they were in such a state, and had such and such opportunities, how much they could do, what good they might effect; by which means they are led, frequently, to overlook the advantages and means of good in their own state, and are

carried out in fond desires after that imaginary one; falling short of which, they do no good at all: So the tempter gains his end. It is our wisdom to improve the present state, the present means, the present hour; all is in God's hand, and he best knows where his servants may or may not be subservient to his glory. And there can be no doubt but he will dispose of us accordingly."—**DODD.**

"Every one, in order to be saved, must, (1.) Be faithful in the performance of that which God requires of him in his station. (2.) He must keep within his own sphere, and trade according to his own talent, not according to that of another. (3.) He must improve the talents he has received, by establishing and enlarging the kingdom of God, both in his own soul, and in the souls of others. (4.) He must not continue idle, under pretence of having but indifferent talents. (5.) He must not leave the smallest talents unemployed. (6.) He must work, as being to give an account of all at the judgment-seat of God. (7.) He must offer to God the glory, use, and profit of his talents and labours. (8.) He must expect no other praise than that which God himself would give him. (9.) He must aspire at no other reward than his. (10.) He must not render himself unworthy the joy of his Lord, by entertaining any vain joy, or human complacency."—**QUESNELLE.**

SECTION CLXVI.—CHRIST ANOINTED BY MARY IN BETHANY.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 6—13; MARK XIV. 3—9;
JOHN XII. 1—11.

THEN Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper in the house of Simon the leper; and Martha served: But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then came Mary unto him,¹ having an alabaster box *with* a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And she brake the box, and poured it on his head, as he sat *at meat*: And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith

one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? ² This he said, not that he cared for the poor; ³ but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. And there were some disciples that had indignation within themselves, and said, To what purpose *is* this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her. When Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them, Let her alone: Why trouble ye the woman? ⁴ for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor with you always, ⁵ and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: But me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: For in that she hath kept this ointment, *and* poured it on my body, she did *it* to anoint *me* aforehand to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached ⁶ throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. ⁷ Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: And they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; ⁸ because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

1. *Then came Mary unto him*—Some think that the woman mentioned here was Mary, the sister of Lazarus; others, Mary Magdalene; but against the former opinion it is argued, that it is not likely, had this been Mary the sister of Lazarus, that Matthew and Mark would have suppressed her name. "Besides," say they, "we should not confound the *repast* which is mentioned here, with that mentioned by John. This one was made only two days before the passover, and that one six days before: The one was made at the house of Simon the leper, the other at the house of Lazarus. At this, the woman poured the oil on the head of Christ; at the other, Mary anointed Christ's feet with it."

"Love and action do necessarily evince each other. True love cannot long lurk unexpressed: It will be looking out at the eyes, creeping out at the mouth, breaking out at the fingers' ends, in some actions of dearness, especially those where there is pain and difficulty to the agent, profit or pleasure to the affected; that is the object

beloved. O Lord! in vain shall we profess to love thee, if we do nothing for thee. Since our goodness cannot reach unto thee, who art our glorious Head, O let us bestow upon thy feet our tears, our hands, our ointment, and whatever our gifts or endeavours may testify our thankfulness and love to thee in them!"—BISHOP HALL.

2. *And given to the poor*—How often does charity serve as a cloak for covetousness! God is sometimes robbed of his right, under the pretence of devoting what is withheld to some charitable purpose, to which there was no intention ever to give it.

3. *Not that he cared for the poor*—There should be a particular emphasis laid on the word "he," as the evangelist studies to show the most determined detestation of his conduct. If stealing were not intended by the evangelist, the word itself must be considered as superfluous; for, when we are told that he had the bag, we need not be informed that he had what was in it. But the apostle says, he was a thief; and

because he was a thief, and had the common purse in his power, therefore he stole as much as he conveniently could without subjecting himself to detection. And, as he saw that the death of Christ was at hand, he wished to secure a provision for himself, before he left the company of the apostles.

4. *Why trouble ye the woman?*—A generous mind is ever pained when it is denied the opportunity of doing good, or when its proffered kindness is refused.

5. *Ye have the poor with you always*—And, consequently, have the opportunity of doing them good at any time; “but me ye have not always;” my bodily presence is about to be removed from you for ever. The woman, under a presentiment of my death, is preparing me for my burial.

6. *Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached*—Another remarkable proof of the prescience of Christ. Such a matter as this, humanly speaking, depended on mere fortuitous circumstances; yet so has

God disposed matters, that the thing has continued, hitherto, as firm and regular as the ordinances of heaven.

7. *For a memorial of her*—As embalming preserves the body from corruption, and she has done this good work to embalm and preserve this body, so will I order every thing concerning this transaction to be carefully recorded, to preserve her memory to the latest ages. The actions which the world blames, through the spirit of envy, covetousness, or malice, God takes delight to distinguish and record.

8. *Consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death*—As long as he lived, they saw an incontestable proof of the divine power of Christ; therefore they wished to put him to death, because many of the Jews who came to see him through curiosity became converts to Christ through his testimony. How blind were these men, not to perceive that he who had raised him, after he had been dead four days, could raise him again, though they had slain him a thousand times!

SECTION CLXVII.—CHRIST PREPARES TO ENTER JERUSALEM.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 1—7; MARK XI. 1—7; LUKE XIX. 29—35;
JOHN XII. 12—16.

ON the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And it came to pass on the next day, when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, Jesus sendeth forth two of his disciples, saying unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt¹ with her, whereon yet never man sat: Loose *them*, and bring *them* hither unto me. And if any *man* say unto you, Why do ye this? thus shall ye say unto him, The Lord hath need of them;² and straightway he will send them hither. And the disciples that were sent went their way, and did as Jesus commanded them, and found the colt, even as he had said unto them, tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof that stood there

said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded, The Lord hath need of him: And they let them go. And they brought the ass, and the colt, to Jesus, and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon, and he sat upon him. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, as it is written, Tell ye the daughter of Sion,³ Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. These things understood not his disciples at the first: But when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

1. *Ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt*—Asses and mules were in common use in Palestine: Horses were seldom to be met with. Our blessed Lord takes every opportunity to convince his disciples that nothing was hidden from him: He informs them of the most minute occurrence; and manifested his power over the heart in disposing the owner to permit the ass to be taken away.

2. *The Lord* (the Proprietor of all things) *hath need of them*—Jesus is continually humbling himself, to show us how odious pride is in the sight of God: But in his humility he is ever giving proofs of his almighty power, that the belief of his Divinity may be established.

3. *Tell ye the daughter of Sion*—The quotation is taken from Zechariah ix. 9, but not in the precise words of the prophet.

This entry into Jerusalem has been termed, "the triumph of Christ." It was indeed the triumph of humility over pride and worldly grandeur; of poverty, over affluence; and of meekness and gentleness, over rage and malice.

He is coming now "meek," full of kindness and compassion to those who were plotting his destruction! He comes to deliver up himself into their hands; their King comes to be murdered by his subjects, and to make his death a ransom-price for their souls!

"The spiritual nature of Christ's king-

dom is strongly indicated by the circumstances connected with his public and royal entry into Jerusalem. This event was intended to call off his disciples and us from the vain notion of a civil monarchy. They thought he was then assuming it; but even then we see him rejecting it. Seeing that our Lord took so much pains to correct the errors of the disciples upon this subject, we may infer, that it was of the first importance that they should know that his kingdom was not of this world, but was spiritual in the strictest sense of the word. There is a tendency in man to look even now, as formerly, for something more than a spiritual kingdom; a kingdom of visible power, and glory, and splendour; and thus their attention, it is to be feared, is often turned by these imaginations from that which is the true glory of the kingdom of our Saviour,—its spiritual character. Our Lord rode upon an ass, to denote that he was a peaceful Sovereign. He came not like an earthly conqueror, with the horse, and the chariot, and the battle-bow. He came 'lowly and meek, having salvation,' and his great business was to 'speak peace to the Heathen.' Those views of the kingdom of Christ, which mingle themselves with worldly aggrandisement, and the pomp and wrath of a conqueror, symbolize with the carnal prejudices of the Jews, and ill accord with his real character."—
R. WATSON.

SECTION CLXVIII.—THE PEOPLE MEET CHRIST WITH HOSANNAS.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 8, 9; MARK XI. 8—10; LUKE XIX. 36—44;
JOHN XII. 19.

AND as they went, a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; ¹ others cut down branches from the trees, and strowed *them* in the way. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples, and the multitudes that went before, and that followed, began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; and cried, saying, Hosanna ² to the Son of David: ³ Hosanna in the highest. ⁴ Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

1. *Spread their garments in the way*—“I was not a little surprised, soon after my arrival in the east, when going to visit a native gentleman, to find the path through the garden covered with white garments. I hesitated; but was told it was for ‘my respect. I must walk *on* them, to show that I accepted the honour.’”—J. ROBERTS.

2. *Hosanna*—“Save now!” or, “Save, we beseech thee!” Redress our grievances, and give us help from oppression! Thus both the words and actions of the people prove, that they acknowledged Christ as their King, and looked to him for deliverance. How easily might he have assumed the sovereignty at this time, had he been so disposed!

3. *Son of David*—A well-known epithet of the Messiah. “He who cometh in the name,” &c. He who comes in the name and authority of the Most High.

4. *Hosanna in the highest*—Either meaning, “Let the heavenly hosts join with us in magnifying this august Being!” or, “Let the utmost degrees of hosannas, of salvation, and deliverance, be communicated to thy people!”

This last journey of our Lord to Jerusalem is a subject of great importance; it is mentioned by all the four evangelists, and has been a subject of criticism and cavil to some unsanctified minds. He has been accused of “attempting, by this method, to feel how far the populace were disposed

to favour his pretensions in establishing himself as a king in the land ; or, at least, by his conduct in this business, he gave much cause for popular seditious." Every circumstance in the case refutes this calumny : (1.) His whole conduct had proved that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he sought not the honour that cometh from man. (2.) He had in a very explicit manner foretold his own premature death, and particularly at this time. (3.) It is evident, from what he had said to his disciples, that he went up to Jerusalem at this time for the express purpose of being sacrificed, and not of erecting a secular kingdom. (4.) What he did at this time was to fulfil a declaration of God delivered by two prophets, upwards of seven hundred years before, relative to his lowliness, poverty, and total deadness to all secular rule and pomp. See Isaiah lxii. 11 ; Zech. ix. 9. (5.) All the time he spent now in Jerusalem, which was about five days, he spent in teaching, precisely in the same way he had done for three years past ; nor do we find that he uttered one maxim dissimilar to what he formerly taught, or said a word calculated to produce any sensation on the hearts of the populace, but that of piety towards God ; and in the parable of the man and his two sons, the husbandmen and the vineyard, he spoke in such a way to the rulers of the people as to show that he knew they were plotting his destruction ; and that, far from fleeing from the face of danger, or strengthening his party against his enemies, he was come to wait at the foot of the altar till his blood should be poured out for the sin of the world ! (6.) Had he affected any thing of a secular kind, he had now the fairest opportunity to accomplish his designs. The people had already received him as Jesus the Prophet ; now they acknowledge him as the Christ or Messiah, and sing the hosanna to him, as immediately appointed by Heaven to be their deliverer. (7.) Though with the character of the Messiah the Jews had connected that of secular royalty, and they now, by spreading their clothes in the way, strewing branches, &c., treat him as a royal person, and one appointed to govern the kingdom ; yet of this he appears to take no notice, farther than to show that an important prophecy was thus fulfilled : He

went as usual into the temple, taught the people pure and spiritual truths, withdrew at night from the city, lodged in private at Mount Olivet ; and thus most studiously and unequivocally showed, that his sole aim was to call the people back to purity and holiness, and prepare them for that kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost, which he was about, by his passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and the mission of the Holy Spirit, to set up in the earth. (8.) Could a person who worked such miracles as he was in the daily habit of working—miracles which proved he possessed unlimited power and unerring wisdom, need subterfuges, or a colouring for any design he wished to accomplish ? He had only to put forth that power essentially resident in himself, and all resistance to his will must be annihilated. In short, every circumstance of the case shows at once the calumny and absurdity of the charge. But, instead of lessening, or rendering suspicious, this or any other part of our Lord's conduct, it shows the whole in a more luminous and glorious point of view ; and thus the wrath of man praises him. (9.) That he was a king, that he was born of a woman, and came into the world for this very purpose, he took every occasion to declare ; but all these declarations showed that his kingdom was spiritual : He would not even interfere with the duty of the civil magistrate to induce an avaricious brother to do justice to the rest of the family, Luke xii. 13, when, probably, a few words from such an authority would have been sufficient to have settled the business ; yet, to prevent all suspicion, and to remove every cause for offence, he absolutely refused to interfere, and took occasion from the very circumstance to declaim against secular views, covetousness, and worldly ambition ! O how groundless does every part of his conduct prove this charge of secular ambition to be !

Such was the spirit of the Master ; such must be the spirit of the disciple. He that will reign with Christ, must be humbled and suffer with him. This is the royal road. The love of the world, in its power and honours, is as inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel as the love of the grossest vice. " If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Reader, take occasion, from this refuted calumny, to imitate thy Lord in the spirituality of his life, to pass through things temporal so as not to lose those that are eternal, that thou mayest reign with him in the glory of his kingdom. Amen.

SECTION CLXIX—CHRIST'S SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 10—16; MARK XI. 11;
LUKE XIX. 45—48.

AND Jesus entered into Jerusalem: And when he was come, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet¹ of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God:² And when he had looked round about upon all things, began to cast out all them that sold,³ and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house is, *and* shall be called, the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came⁴ to him in the temple, and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,⁵ and said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do: For all the people were very attentive to hear him.

1. *This is Jesus the Prophet*—That Prophet whom Moses spoke of, Deut. xviii. 18: "I will raise them up a prophet like unto thee," &c. Every expression of the multitude plainly intimated that they fully received our blessed Lord as the promised Messiah. How strange is it that these same people (if the creatures of the high priest be not only intended) should, about five days after, change their hosannas for, "Away with him! Crucify him! crucify him!" How fickle is the multitude! Even when they get right, there is but little hope that they will continue so long.

2. *Jesus went into the temple of God, &c.*—"Avarice," says one, "covered with the veil of religion, is one of those things on which Christ looks with the greatest

indignation in his church. Merchandize of holy things, simoniacal presentations, fraudulent exchanges, a mercenary spirit in sacred functions, ecclesiastical employments obtained by flattery, service, or attendance, or by any thing which is instead of money; collations, nominations, and elections made through any other motive than the glory of God:—These are all fatal and damnable profanations, of which those in the temple were only a shadow."

They who are placed in the church of Christ to serve souls, and do it not; and they who enjoy the revenues of the church, and neglect the service of it; are thieves and robbers in more senses than one.

3. *Cast out all them that sold*—"The practice of making the courts of the temple

a place of traffic, was evidently regarded by our Lord as a great abuse. The noise would disturb the more serious worshippers; and various cheats and impositions were practised, as we may gather from our Lord's charging them with having made his house 'a den of thieves.' It would seem remarkable, that this profanation was suffered by the priests, who were so scrupulous and exact in whatever appertained to the honour of their temple; but there has been, in all ages, great inconsistency among ceremonious formalists; and superstition and irreverence are often found together."—R. WATSON.

Our Lord is represented here as purifying his temple; and this we may judge he did in reference to his true temple, the church, to show that nothing that was worldly or unholy should have any place among his followers, or in that heart in which he should condescend to dwell. It is marvelous that these interested, vile men did not raise a mob against him; but it is probable they were overawed by the divine power; or, seeing the multitudes on the side of Christ, they were afraid to molest him.

I knew a case something similar to this, which did not succeed so well. A very pious Clergyman of my acquaintance, observing a woman keeping a public standing to sell nuts, gingerbread, &c., at the very porch of his church, on the Lord's day, desired her to remove thence, and not defile the house of God, while she profaned the sabbath of the Lord. She paid no attention to him. He warned her the next sabbath,

but still to no purpose. Going in one Lord's day to preach, and finding her still in the very entrance, with her stall, he overthrew the stall, and scattered the stuff into the street. He was shortly after summoned to appear before the royal court; which, to its eternal reproach, condemned the action, and fined the man of God in a considerable sum of money.

4. *The blind and the lame came*—Having condemned the profane use of the temple, he now shows the proper use of it. It is a house of prayer, where God is to manifest his goodness and power in giving sight to the spiritually blind, and feet to the lame. The church or chapel in which the blind and the lame are not healed, has no Christ in it, and is not worthy of attendance.

5. *The chief priests were sore displeased*—Or, "were incensed." Incensed at what? At the purification of the profaned temple? This was a work they should have done themselves, but for which they had neither grace nor influence; and their pride and jealousy will not suffer them to permit others to do it. Strange as it may appear, the priesthood itself, in all corrupt times, has been ever the most forward to prevent a reform in the church. Was it because they were conscious that a reformer would find them no better than money-changers in, and profaners of, the house of God; and that they and their system must be overturned, if the true worship of God were restored? Let him who is concerned answer this to his conscience.

SECTION CLXX.—GREEKS DESIRE TO SEE JESUS.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 17; MARK XI. 11; JOHN XII. 20—36.

AND there were certain Greeks¹ among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.² Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: And again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.³ And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man⁴ should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,⁵ it abideth alone: But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life⁶ shall lose it; and he that hateth his

life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me,⁷ let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: If any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour. Now is my soul troubled;⁸ and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour:⁹ But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.¹⁰ Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: Others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.¹¹ Now is the judgment of this world:¹² Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,¹³ will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever:¹⁴ And how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.¹⁵ Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you:¹⁶ For he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.¹⁷ These things spake Jesus, and he left them, and departed; and now the even-tide was come, he went out of the city unto Bethany, with the twelve; and he lodged there, and did hide himself from them.

1. *Certain Greeks*—There are three opinions concerning these: (1.) That they were proselytes of the gate or covenant, who came up to worship the true God at this feast. (2.) That they were real Jews, who lived in Grecian provinces, and spoke the Greek language. (3.) That they were mere Gentiles, who never knew the true God; and, hearing of the fame of the temple, or the miracles of our Lord, came to offer sacrifices to Jehovah, and to worship him according to the manner of the people of that land.

2. *Sir, we would see Jesus*—We have heard much concerning him, and we wish to see the person of whom we have heard such strange things. The final salvation of the soul often originates, under God, in a principle of simple curiosity. Many have only wished to see or hear a man who speaks much of Jesus, his miracles, and his mercies; and, in hearing, have felt the powers of the world to come, and have become genuine converts to the truths of the gospel.

3. *Andrew and Philip tell Jesus*—How pleasing to God is this union, when the ministers of his gospel agree and unite together to bring souls to Christ! But where self-love prevails, and the honour that comes from God is not sought, this union never exists. Bigotry often ruins every generous sentiment among the different denominations of the people of God.

4. *The hour is come, that the Son of Man, &c.*—The time is just at hand in which the gospel shall be preached to all nations, the middle wall of partition broken down, and Jews and Gentiles united in one fold. But this could not be till after his death and resurrection, as the succeeding verse teaches. The disciples were the first-fruits of the Jews; these Greeks, the first-fruits of the Gentiles.

5. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die*—Our Lord compares himself to a grain of wheat; his death, to a grain sown and decomposed in the ground; his resurrection, to the blade which springs up from the dead grain; which grain, thus

dying, brings forth an abundance of fruit. I must die to be glorified; and, unless I am glorified, I cannot establish a glorious church of Jews and Gentiles upon earth. In comparing himself thus to a grain of wheat, our Lord shows us: (1.) The cause of his death; the order of God, who had rated the redemption of the world at this price; as in nature he had attached the multiplication of the corn to the death or decomposition of the grain. (2.) The end of his death; the redemption of a lost world; the justification, sanctification, and glorification of men: As the multiplication of the corn is the end for which the grain is sown and dies. (3.) The mystery of his death, which we must credit without being able fully to comprehend, as we believe the dead grain multiplies itself, and we are nourished by that multiplication, without being able to comprehend how it is done. The greatest philosopher that ever existed could not tell how one grain became thirty, sixty, a hundred, or a thousand; how it vegetated in the earth; how earth, air, and water, its component parts, could assume such a form and consistence, emit such odours, or produce such tastes. Nor can the wisest man on earth tell how the bodies of animals are nourished by this produce of the ground; how wheat, for instance, is assimilated to the very nature of the bodies that receive it, and how it becomes flesh and blood, nerves, sinews, bones, &c. All we can say is, "The thing is so; and it has pleased God that it should be so, and not otherwise." So there are many things in the person, death, and sacrifice of Christ, which we can neither explain nor comprehend. All we should say here is, "It is by this means that the world was redeemed; through this sacrifice men are saved: It has pleased God that it should be so, and not otherwise." Some say, "Our Lord spoke this according to the philosophy of those days, which was by no means correct." But, I would ask, Has ever a more correct philosophy on this point appeared? Is it not a physical truth, that the whole body of the grain dies, is converted into fine earth, which forms the first nourishment of the embryo plant, and prepares it to receive a grosser support from the surrounding soil; and that nothing

lives but the germ, which was included in this body, and which must die also, if it did not receive, from the death or putrefaction of the body of the grain, nourishment, so as to enable it to unfold itself? Though the body of our Lord died, there was still the germ, the quickening power of the Divinity, which re-animated that body, and stamped the atonement with infinite merit. Thus the merit was multiplied; and, through the death of that one person, the man Christ Jesus united to the Eternal Word, salvation was procured for the whole world. Never was a simile more appropriate, nor an illustration more happy or successful.

6. *He that loveth his life*—I am about to give up my life for the salvation of men; but I shall speedily receive it back with everlasting honour, by my resurrection from the dead. In this I should be imitated by my disciples, who should, when called to it, lay down their lives for the truth; and, if they do, they shall receive them again with everlasting honour.

7. *If any man serve me*—Christ is a master in a twofold sense: (1.) To instruct men. (2.) To employ and appoint them their work. He who wishes to serve Christ must become: (1.) His disciple or scholar, that he may be taught. (2.) His servant, that he may be employed by and obey his Master. To such a person a twofold promise is given: (1.) He shall be with Christ, in eternal fellowship with him. And, (2.) He shall be honoured by the Lord; he shall have an abundant recompence in glory; but how great, eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

8. *Now is my soul troubled*—Our blessed Lord took upon him our weaknesses, that he might sanctify them to us. As a man, he was troubled at the prospect of a violent death. Nature abhors death: God has implanted that abhorrence in nature, that it might become a principle of self-preservation; and it is to this that we owe all that prudence and caution by which we avoid danger. When we see Jesus working miracles which demonstrate his omnipotence, we should be led to conclude that he was not man, were it not for such passages as these. The reader must ever remember, that it was essentially necessary

that he should be man; for, without being such, he could not have died for the sin of the world.

9. *And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour*—The sense of our Lord's words is this: "When a man feels a fear of a sudden or violent death, it is natural to him to cry out, 'Father, save me from this death!' for he hopes that the glory of God and his welfare may be accomplished some other way, less dreadful to his nature: But why should I say so, seeing for this very purpose, that I might die this violent death for the sins of mankind, I am come into the world, and have almost arrived at the hour of my crucifixion?"

10. *Father, glorify thy name*—By "the name" of God is to be understood himself, in all his attributes; his wisdom, truth, mercy, justice, holiness, &c., which were all more abundantly glorified by Christ's death and resurrection, (that is, shown forth in their own excellence,) than they had ever been before. Christ teaches here a lesson of submission to the divine will. Do with me what thou wilt, so that glory may redound to thy name. "I have accomplished my eternal designs on thee. I have sent thee into the world to make an atonement for the sin of the world, and to satisfy my offended justice. I will finish my work. Thou shalt shed thy blood upon the cross. My glory is interested in the consummation of thy sacrifice. But, in procuring my own glory, I shall procure thine. Thy life and thy death glorify me: I have glorified thee by the miracles which have accompanied thy mission; and I will continue to glorify thee at thy death, by unexampled prodigies, and thy resurrection shall be the completion of thy glory and of thy elevation." Christ was glorified: (1.) By the prodigies which happened at his death. (2.) In his resurrection. (3.) In his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God. (4.) In the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles. And, (5.) In the astonishing success with which the gospel was accompanied, and by which the kingdom of Christ has been established in the world.

11. *This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes*—Probably meaning those Greeks who had been brought to

him by Philip and Andrew. The Jews had frequent opportunities of seeing his miracles, and of being convinced that he was the Messiah; but these Greeks, who were to be a first-fruits of the Gentiles, had never any such opportunity. For their sakes, therefore, to confirm them in the faith, this miraculous voice appears to have come from heaven.

12. *Now is the judgment of this world*—The judgment spoken of in this place is applied by some to the punishment which was about to fall on the Jewish people for rejecting Christ. And "the ruler or prince of this world" is understood to be satan, who had blinded the eyes of the Jews, and hardened their hearts, that they might not believe on the Son of God; but his kingdom, not only among the Jews, but in all the world, was about to be destroyed by the abolition of idolatry, and the vocation of the Gentiles.

13. *If I be lifted up from the earth, &c.*—After I shall have died and risen again, by the preaching of my word and the influence of my Spirit, I shall attract and illuminate both Jews and Gentiles. It was one of the peculiar characteristics of the Messiah, that unto him should the gathering of the people be. And probably our Lord refers to the prophecy, Isaiah xi. 10, which peculiarly belonged to the Gentiles: "There shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: And his rest shall be glorious." There is an allusion here to the ensigns or colours of commanders of regiments, elevated on high places, on long poles, that the people might see where the pavilion of their general was, and so flock to his standard.

14. *That Christ abideth for ever*—There was no part of the law nor of the scripture that said the Messiah should not die; but there are several passages that say, as expressly as they can, that Christ must die, and die for the sin of the world too. But as there were several passages that spoke of the perpetuity of his reign, they probably confounded the one with the other, and thus drew the conclusion, The Messiah cannot die; for the scripture hath said, his throne, kingdom, and reign shall be eternal. The prophets, as well as the evangelists and apostles, speak sometimes of the di-

vine, sometimes of the human, nature of Christ : When they speak of the former, they show forth its glory, excellence, omnipotence, omniscience, and eternity ; when they speak of the latter, they show forth its humiliations, afflictions, sufferings, and death. And those who do not make the proper distinction between the two natures of Christ, the human and the divine, will ever make blunders, as well as the Jews. It is only on the ground of two natures in Christ that the scriptures which speak of him, either in the Old or New Testament, can be possibly understood. No position in the gospel is plainer than this, God was manifest in the flesh.

15. *Yet a little while is the light with you*—In answer to their objection, our Lord compares himself to a light, which was about to disappear for a short time, and afterwards to shine forth with more abundant lustre ; but not to their comfort, if they continued to reject its present beamings. He exhorts them to follow this light while it was among them. The Christ shall abide for ever, it is true ; but he will not always be visible. When he shall depart from you, ye shall be left in the

thickest darkness ; in impenitence and hardness of heart. Then shall ye wish to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it. Then shall ye seek me, but shall not find me. For the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to the Gentiles. If ye believe not in me now, ye shall then wish ye had done it, when wishing shall be for ever fruitless.

16. *Lest darkness come upon you*—Ye have a good part of your journey yet to go : Ye cannot travel safely but in the day-light ; that light is almost gone ; run, that the darkness overtake you not, or in it ye shall stumble, fall, and perish ! Reader, is thy journey near an end ? There may be but a very little time remaining to thee. O run, fly to Christ, lest the darkness of death overtake thee, before thy soul have found redemption in his blood !

17. *Children of light*—Let the light, the truth of Christ, so dwell in and work by you, that ye may be all light in the Lord ; that, as truly as a child is the produce of his own parent, and partakes of his nature, so ye may be children of the light, having nothing in you but truth and righteousness.

SECTION CLXXI.—THE JEWS BELIEVE NOT ; THE FIG-TREE CURSED.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 17—19 ; MARK XI. 12—14 ;
JOHN XII. 37—43.

BUT though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him : ¹ That the saying of Esaias ² the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, ³ because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, ⁴ and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue : For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany ; ⁵ and he lodged there. ⁶ Now in the morning as he returned

into the city, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree in the way afar off, having leaves, he came to it, if haply he might find any thing thereon: And when he came to it, he found nothing thereon, but leaves only; for the time of figs was not *yet*.⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hercafter for ever. Let no fruit grow on thee⁸ henceforward for ever. And his disciples heard *it*: And presently the fig tree withered away.

1. *Yet they believed not on him*—Though the miracles were wrought for this very purpose, that they might believe in Christ, and escape the coming wrath, and every evidence given that Jesus was the Messiah, yet they did not believe; but they were blinded by their passions, and obstinately hardened their hearts against the truth.

2. *That the saying of Esaias*—Or, “Thus the word of Isaiah was fulfilled.” For it certainly does not mean the end the Pharisees had in view by not believing; nor the end which the prophet had in view in predicting the incredulity of the Jews; but simply, such a thing was spoken by the prophet, concerning the Jews of his own time, and it had its literal fulfilment in those of our Lord’s time.

3. *Therefore they could not believe*—Why? Because they did not believe the report of the prophets concerning Christ; therefore they credited not the miracles which he wrought as a proof that he was the person foretold by the prophets, and promised to their fathers. Having thus resisted the report of the prophets, and the evidence of Christ’s own miracles, God gave them up to the darkness and hardness of their own hearts, so that they continued to reject every overture of divine mercy; and God refused to heal their national wound, but, on the contrary, commissioned the Romans against them, so that their political existence was totally destroyed.

The prophecy of Isaiah was neither the cause nor the motive of their unbelief: It was a simple prediction, which imposed no necessity on them to resist the offers of mercy. They might have believed, notwithstanding the prediction; for such kinds of prophecies always include a tacit condition; they may believe, if they properly use the light and power which God has given them. Such prophecies also are of

a general application; they will always suit somebody; for in every age persons will be found who resist the grace and Spirit of God like these disobedient Jews. However, it appears that this prediction belonged especially to these rejecters and crucifiers of Christ; and if the prophecy was infallible in its execution, with respect to them, it was not because of the prediction that they continued in unbelief, but because of their own voluntary obstinacy; and God, foreseeing this, foretold it by the prophet.

4. *When he saw his glory*—“I saw Jehovah,” says the prophet, “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah, God of hosts; the whole earth shall be full of his glory!” It appears evident, from this passage, that the glory which the prophet saw was the glory of Jehovah. John, therefore, saying here, that it was the glory of Jesus, shews that he considered Jesus to be Jehovah.

5. *And went out of the city into Bethany*—Bethany was a village about two miles distant from Jerusalem, by Mount Olivet; and it is remarkable that from this day till his death, which happened about six days after, he spent not one night in Jerusalem, but went every evening to Bethany, and returned to the city each morning. They were about to murder the Lord of glory; and the true light, which they had rejected, is now departing from them.

6. *Lodged there*—Not merely to avoid the snares laid for him by those bad men, but to take away all suspicion of his affecting the regal power.

7. *For the time of figs was not yet*—Rather, “For it was not the season of gathering figs yet.” When our Lord saw this fig-tree by the way-side, apparently

flourishing, he went to it to gather some of the figs: Being on the way-side, it was not private, but public, property; and any traveller had an equal right to its fruit. As it was not as yet the time for gathering in the fruits, and yet about the time when they were ready to be gathered, our Lord with propriety expected to find some. But as this happened about five days before that passover on which Christ suffered, and the passover that year fell on the beginning of April, it has been asked, "How could our Lord expect to find ripe figs in the end of March?" Answer: Because figs were ripe in Judea as early as the passover. Besides, the fig-tree puts forth its fruit first, and afterwards its leaves. Indeed, this tree, in the climate which is proper for it, has fruit on it all the year round, as I have often seen. All the difficulty in the text may be easily removed, by considering, that the climate of Judea is widely different from that of Great Britain. The summer begins there in March, and the harvest at passover, as all travellers into those countries testify; therefore, as our Lord met with this tree five days before the passover, it is evident, (1.) That it was the time of ripe figs; and, (2.) That it was not the time of gathering them, because this did not begin till the passover, and the transaction here mentioned took place five days before.

For farther satisfaction on this point, let us suppose, (1.) That this tree was intended to point out the state of the Jewish people. (i.) They made a profession of the true religion. (ii.) They considered themselves the peculiar people of God, and despised and reprobated all others. (iii.) They were only hypocrites, having nothing

of religion but the profession;—leaves, and no fruit.

(2.) That our Lord's conduct towards this tree is to be considered as emblematical of the treatment and final perdition which was to come upon this hypocritical and ungodly nation. (i.) It was a proper time for them to have borne fruit: Jesus had been preaching the doctrine of repentance and salvation among them for more than three years; the choicest influences of Heaven had descended upon them; and every thing was done in this vineyard that ought to be done, in order to make it fruitful. (ii.) The time was now at hand in which God would require fruit, good fruit; and, if it did not produce such, the tree should be hewn down by the Roman axe. Therefore, (1.) The tree is properly the Jewish nation. (2.) Christ's curse, the sentence of destruction which had now gone out against it. And, (3.) Its withering away, the final and total ruin of the Jewish state by the Romans. His cursing the fig-tree was not occasioned by any resentment at being disappointed at not finding fruit on it, but to point out unto his disciples the wrath which was coming upon a people who had now nearly filled up the measure of their iniquity.

A fruitless soul, that has had much cultivation bestowed on it, may expect to be dealt with as God did with this unrighteous nation.

8. *Let no fruit grow on thee*—Can a professor, who affords Christ nothing but barren words and wishes, expect any thing but his malediction? When the soul continues in unfruitfulness, the influences of grace are removed, and then the tree speedily withers from the very root.

SECTION CLXXII.—CHRIST AGAIN PURGES THE TEMPLE.

A. D. 29.

MARK XI. 15—19; JOHN XII. 44—50.

AND they come to Jerusalem: And Jesus went into the temple,¹ and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry

any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. Jesus cried and said,² He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.³ And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world,⁴ that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words,⁵ and believe not, I judge him not:⁶ For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him⁷ in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself;⁸ but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment,⁹ what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting:¹⁰ Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: For they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

1. *Jesus went into the temple*—“The buyers and sellers, though scared by the previous conduct of Christ, and unable, as the prophet foretold, to abide his coming, had rallied as soon as he went away, and were at their market again in the temple, after Christ retired. But as he repaired again to the temple, to pay his devotions at his Father’s house, finding them there, the Lamb of God again put on the terrors of Judah’s Lion, and drove the whole herd before him.”—J. BENNETT.

2. *Jesus cried and said*—This is our Lord’s concluding discourse to this wicked people. He spoke these words aloud, and showed his earnest desire for their salvation.

3. *Believeth not on me only, but on him that sent me*—Here he asserts again his indivisible unity with the Father: He who believes on the Son, believes on the Father; he who hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father; he who honours the Son, honours the Father. Though it was for asserting this—his oneness with God—that they were going to crucify him, yet he retracts nothing of what he had spoken, but strongly re-asserts it, in the very jaws of death.

4. *I am come a light into the world*—

Before the coming of this Saviour, this Sun of Righteousness, into the world, all was darkness; at his rising, the darkness is dispersed; but it only profits those whose eyes are open to receive the rays of this Sun of Righteousness.

5. *If any man hear my words*—A man must hear the words of Christ in order to believe them; and he must believe, in order to keep them; and he must keep them, in order to his salvation.

6. *I judge him not*—I need not do it; the words of Moses and the prophets judge and condemn him.

7. *The word that I have spoken shall judge him*—Ye shall be judged according to my doctrine; the maxims which ye have heard from my mouth shall be those on which ye shall be tried in the great day; and ye shall be condemned or acquitted, according as ye have believed or obeyed them, or according as ye have despised and violated them.

8. *For I have not spoken of myself*—I have not spoken for my secular interest; I have not aimed at making any gain of you; I have not set up myself, as your teachers in general do, to be supported by my disciples, and to be credited on my own testimony; I have taught you, not the things

of men, but the deep, everlasting truths of God. As his Envoy, I came to you; and his truth only I proclaim.

9. *Gave me a commandment*—Christ, as the Messiah, received his commission from God; what he should command,—every thing that related to the formation and establishment of the Christian institution; and what he should speak,—all his private conversations with his disciples or others; he, as man, commanded and spoke through the constant inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

10. *I know that his commandment is life everlasting*—These words of our Lord are similar to that saying in St. John's first epistle: "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." God's commandment, or commission, is, "Preach salvation to a lost world, and give thyself a ransom for all; and whosoever believeth on thee shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Every word of Christ, properly credited, and carefully applied, leads to peace and happiness here, and to glory hereafter. What an amiable view of the gospel of the grace of God does this give us! It is a system of eternal life, divinely calculated to answer every important purpose to dying, miserable man. This sacred truth Jesus witnessed with his last breath. He began his public ministry proclaiming the kingdom of God; and he now

finishes it by asserting, that the whole commission is eternal life; and, having attested this, he went out of the temple, and retired to Bethany.

The public work of our Lord was now done; and the remnant of his time, previously to his crucifixion, he spent in teaching his disciples, instructing them in the nature of his kingdom, his intercession, and the mission of the Holy Spirit; and in that heavenly life which all true believers live with the Father, through faith in the Son, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Many persons are liberal in their condemnation of the Jews, because they did not believe on the Son of God; and, doubtless, their unbelief has merited and received the most signal punishment: But those who condemn them do not reflect that they are probably committing the same sort of transgression, in circumstances which heighten the iniquity of their sin. Will it avail any man, that he has believed that Christ has come in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil, who does not come unto him that he may have life, but continues to live under the power and guilt of sin? Paradoxical as it may seem, it is nevertheless possible for a man to credit the four evangelists, and yet live and die an infidel, as far as his own salvation is concerned. Reader, it is possible to hold the truth in unrighteousness. Pray to God that this may not be thy condemnation.

SECTION CLXXIII.—THE FIG-TREE WITHERED.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXI. 20—22; MARK XI. 20—26.

AND in the morning, as they passed by, when the disciples saw the fig tree dried up from the roots,¹ they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!² And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That if ye have faith, and doubt not,³ ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; it shall be done, *and* he shall have whatsoever he saith.

And therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, *and* shall ask in prayer,⁴ believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any : That your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

1. *Dried up from the roots*—"From the roots the tree was dried up; its leaves appearing as if scorched with fire, and the branches all presenting the indications of dry sticks, and even the bark down to the root showing that all vital sap was gone, and that death had smitten the tree even to the very root that was hidden in the earth."—J. BENNETT.

2. *How soon is the fig-tree withered away*—We often say to our neighbours, "How suddenly this man died! Who could have expected it so soon?" But who takes warning by these examples? What we say to-day of others, may be said to-morrow of ourselves. "Be ye also ready." Lord, increase our faith!

"It was not an act of passionate disappointment in him to curse the fig-tree because he found no fruit thereon, as infidels have profanely asserted, which is refuted by his whole character, on which a calm dignity was constantly impressed; he knew that there was no fruit on it, and he might have gone to other trees, where his wants might have been supplied; but he intended to teach his disciples an awful lesson by an emblem which not only pointed out the doom of a degenerate nation,—of whose hypocritical and delusive pretensions the barren fig-tree was a sign,—but also that of hypocrites and apostates from his religion; for to this event St. Jude appears strikingly to allude, when he marks the character and fate of such persons, as 'trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.'"—R. WATSON.

3. *If ye have faith, and doubt not*—"Removing mountains," and "rooting up of mountains," are phrases very generally used to signify the removing or conquering great difficulties, getting through perplex-

ities. He that has faith will get through every difficulty and perplexity; mountains shall become mole-hills or plains before him.

4. *What things soever ye shall ask in prayer*—In order to get salvation, there must be, (1.) A conviction of the want of it: This begets, (2.) Prayer, or warm desires, in the heart: Then, (3.) The person asks, that is, makes use of words expressive of his wants and wishes: (4.) Believes the word of promise, relative to the fulfilment of his wants: And, (5.) Receives, according to the merciful promise of God, the salvation which his soul requires.

The case of the barren fig-tree which our Lord cursed has been pitifully misunderstood and misapplied. The whole account of this transaction, as stated above, I believe to be correct; it is so much in our Lord's usual manner, that the propriety of it will scarcely be doubted. He was ever acting the part of the philosopher, moralist, and divine, as well as that of the Saviour of sinners. In his hand, every providential occurrence, and every object of nature, became a means of instruction: The stones of the desert, the lilies of the field, the fowls of heaven, the beasts of the forest, fruitful and unfruitful trees, with every ordinary occurrence, were so many grand texts, from which he preached the most illuminating and impressive sermons, for the instruction and salvation of his audience. This wisdom and condescension cannot be sufficiently admired. But shall the example of the fruitless fig-tree be lost on us, as well as on the Jews? God forbid! Let us therefore take heed, lest, having been so long unfruitful, God should say, "Let no fruit appear on thee hereafter for ever!" and, in consequence of this, we wither and die away.

SECTION CLXXIV.—THE HUSBANDMAN AND HIS TWO SONS.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 23—32; MARK XI. 27—33; XII. 1; LUKE XX. 1—9.

AND they come again to Jerusalem : And when he was come into the temple, it came to pass, *that* as he was walking, as he taught the people, and preached the gospel, there came upon him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us by what authority doest thou these things ? or who is he that gave thee this authority to do these things ? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one question, and answer me ; *even* one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it ? from heaven, or of men ? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven ; he will say unto us, Why then believed ye him not ? But and if we shall say, Of men ; we fear all the people will stone us : For they be persuaded that John was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell¹ whence *it was*. And Jesus answering said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. And he began to speak unto them, *and* to the people, by parables. But what think ye ? A *certain* man had two sons ;² and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not :³ But afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir :⁴ And went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father ? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots⁵ go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness,⁶ and ye believed him not : But the publicans and the harlots believed him ; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

1. *We cannot tell*—Simplicity gives a wonderful confidence and peace of mind ; but double-dealing causes a thousand inquietudes and troubles. Let a man do his utmost to conceal in his own heart the evidence he has of truth and innocence, to countenance his not yielding to it ; God, who sees the heart, will, in the light of the last day, produce it as a witness against him, and make it his judge. “ We cannot tell,” said they ; which, in the words of

truth, should have been, “ We will not tell, for we will not have this man for the Messiah : Because, if we acknowledge John as his forerunner, we must, of necessity, receive Jesus as the Christ.”

They who are engaged against the truth are abandoned to the spirit of falsity, and scruple not at a lie. Pharisaical pride, according to its different interests, either pretends to know every thing, or affects to know nothing. Among such, we may meet

with numerous instances of arrogance and affected humility. God often hides from the wise and prudent what he reveals unto babes; for, when they use their wisdom only to invent the most plausible excuses for rejecting the truth when it comes to them, it is but just that they should be punished with that ignorance to which, in their own defence, they are obliged to have recourse.

2. *A certain man had two sons*—Under the emblem of these two sons, one of whom was a libertine, disobedient, and insolent, but who afterwards thought on his ways, and returned to his duty; and the second, a hypocrite, who promised all, and did nothing; our Lord points out, on the one hand, the tax-gatherers and sinners of all descriptions, who, convicted by the preaching of John and that of Christ, turned away from their iniquities and embraced the gospel; and, on the other hand, the scribes, Pharisees, and self-righteous people, who, pretending a zeal for the law, would not receive the salvation of the gospel.

“It is generally admitted, that by ‘the kingdom,’ or ‘vineyard,’ in this parable, is intended the church: Here, then, is a command of God to enter into his church; and here is an example of a person, as soon as he has repented, complying with the precept. No one would have believed that the first son repented, if it had not been added, that he went; and your repentance amounts to nothing, if it do not move you to enter into God’s church, and to work for him.”—DANIEL ISAAC.

3. *I will not*—This is the general reply of every sinner to the invitations of God; and, in it, the Most High is treated without ceremony or respect. They only are safe who persist not in the denial.

“Who says this? Yonder swearer, who never opens his lips, but to vent the abomination of his heart. That drunkard, whose insatiable appetite, like the horseleech, cries, ‘Give, give;’ and never saith, ‘It is enough.’ The fornicator, who lives in chambering and wantonness. The man who neglects all the ordinances of religion, who never calls upon his name, never hears his word, never honours his sabbaths. These make no pretences to godliness; embarrass themselves with no formality;

wear no disguise; use no hesitation. They openly show the image of their Master impressed upon their forehead. They explicitly avow their determination.”—JAY.

4. *I go, sir*—This is all respect, complaisance, and professed obedience; but “he went not:” He promised well, but did not perform. What a multitude of such are in the world, professing to know God, but denying him in their works! Alas! what will such professions avail, when God comes to take away the soul?

“His language was respectful, his promise was fair, and he walked forth, towards the vineyard, till he apprehended himself out of sight: Then he turned aside, loitered away his time, joined evil company, set off to a revel, in a little time spent all his substance in riotous living, died in wretchedness; and, as he expired, he was heard to groan, ‘O that I had hearkened to a father’s counsel!’”—JAY.

5. *The publicans and the harlots*—In all their former conduct they had said, “No.” Now they yield to the voice of truth when they hear it, and enter into the kingdom, embracing the salvation brought to them in the gospel. The others, who had been always professing the most ready and willing obedience, and who pretended to be waiting for the kingdom of God, did not receive it when it came, but rather chose, while making the best professions, to continue members of the synagogue of satan.

6. *For John came unto you in the way of righteousness*—It is very difficult to get a worldly-minded and self-righteous man brought to Christ. Examples signify little to him. Urge the example of an eminent saint, he is discouraged at it. Show him a profligate sinner converted to God, him he is ashamed to own and follow; and, as to the conduct of the generality of the followers of Christ, it is not striking enough to impress him. John, and Christ, and the apostles preach; but to multitudes all is in vain. Envy, malice, and double-dealing have always a difficult part to act, and are ultimately confounded by their own projects, and ruined by their own operations. On the other hand, simplicity and sincerity are not obliged to use a mask, but always walk in a plain way.

SECTION CLXXV.—THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXI. 33—46; MARK XII. 1—12;
LUKE XX. 9—19.

HEAR another parable : There was a certain householder,¹ which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, *or a place for the winefat*, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And the husbandmen caught his servants, and beat one, and sent *him* away empty, and killed another, and stoned another. And again he sent unto them other servants² more than the first : And they did unto them likewise ; and at him *who was the chief* they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled, and empty. And again he sent another, the third ; and him they wounded also, and cast *him* out *and* killed, and many others ; beating some, and killing some. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do ? I will send my son. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last of all unto them, saying, It may be they will reverence my son when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir : Come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance, that *it* may be ours. And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard,³ and slew *him*. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen ? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. . *Jesus said*, He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid. And Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, What is this then that is written ? Did ye never read this in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ?⁴ And whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken : But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and the scribes and Pharisees had heard his parables, they the same hour sought to lay hands on him ; for they perceived that he

had spoken this parable against them.⁵ But they feared the multitude,⁶ because they took him for a prophet: And they left him and went their way.

1. *There was a certain householder*—Let us endeavour to find out a general and practical meaning for this parable: A householder, the Supreme Being; the family, the Jewish nation; the vineyard, the city of Jerusalem; the fence, the divine protection; the wine-press, the law and sacrificial rites; the tower, the temple, in which the divine presence was manifested; the husbandmen, the priests and doctors of the law. "Went from home;" entrusted the cultivation of the vineyard to the priests, &c., with the utmost confidence; as a man would do who had the most trusty servants, and was obliged to absent himself from home for a certain time.

Some apply this parable also to Christianity, thus: The master or father, our blessed Lord; the family, professing Christians in general; the vineyard, the true church, or assembly of the faithful; the hedge, the true faith, which keeps the sacred assembly enclosed and defended from the errors of Heathenism and false Christianity; the wine-press, the atonement made by the sacrifice of Christ, typified by the sacrifices under the law; the tower, the promises of the divine presence and protection; the husbandmen, the apostles, and all their successors in the ministry; the going from home, the ascension to heaven.

2. *Other servants*—There is not a moment in which God does not shower down his gifts upon men, and require the fruit of them. Various instruments are used to bring sinners to God: There are prophets, apostles, pastors, teachers; some with his gift after this manner, and some after that. The true disciples of Christ have been persecuted in all ages, and the greatest share of the persecution has fallen upon the ministers of his religion; for there have always been good and bad husbandmen, and the latter have persecuted the former.

3. *And cast him out of the vineyard*—Utterly rejected the counsel of God against themselves; and would neither acknowledge the authority of Christ, nor submit to his teaching. What a strange and unaccountable case is this! A sinner, to enjoy

a little longer his false peace, and the gratification of his sinful appetites, rejects Jesus, and persecutes that gospel which troubles his sinful repose!

4. *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*—This passage, as applied by our Lord to himself, contains an abridgment of the whole doctrine of the gospel: (1.) The Lord's peculiar work is astonishingly manifested in the mission of Jesus Christ. (2.) He, being rejected and crucified by the Jews, became an atonement for the sin of the world. (3.) He was raised again from the dead, a proof of his conquest over death and sin, and a pledge of immortality to his followers. (4.) He was constituted the foundation on which the salvation of mankind rests, and the corner-stone which unites Jews and Gentiles, beautifies, strengthens, and completes the whole building, as the head-stone, or uppermost stone in the corner, does the whole edifice. (5.) He is hereby rendered the object of the joy and admiration of all his followers, and the glory of man. "This was done by the Lord, and is marvellous in our eyes."

5. *The chief priests perceived that he had spoken this parable against them*—The most wholesome advice passes for an affront with those who have shut their hearts against the truth. When that which should lead to repentance only kindles the flame of malice and revenge, there is but little hope of the salvation of such persons.

6. *They sought to lay hands on him, but they feared the multitude*—Restraining and preventing grace is an excellent blessing, particularly where it leads to repentance and salvation; but he who abstains from certain evils, only through fear of scandal or punishment, has already committed them in his heart, and is guilty before God. The intrepidity of our Lord is worthy of admiration and imitation: In the very face of his most inveterate enemies, he bears a noble testimony to the truth, reproves their iniquities, denounces the divine judgments, and, in the very teeth of destruction, braves danger

and death! A true minister of Christ fears nothing but God, when his glory is concerned; a hireling fears every thing, except Him whom he ought to fear.

SECTION CLXXVI.—THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXII. 1—14.

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: And they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: Come unto the marriage. But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*. But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: And he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.¹ Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good:² And the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came³ in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:⁴ And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.⁵ Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen.⁶

FROM this parable it appears plain, (1.) That the "King" means the great God. (2.) His "Son," the Lord Jesus. (3.) The "marriage," his incarnation, or espousing human nature, by taking it into union with himself. (4.) The "marriage-feast," the economy of the gospel; during which, men are invited to partake of the blessings purchased by, and consequent on, the incarnation and death of our blessed Lord. (5.) ~~By~~ those who had been "bidden," or invited, are meant the Jews in general, who had this union of Christ with human nature, and his sacrifice for sin, pointed out by

various rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices under the law; and who, by all the prophets, had been constantly invited to believe in and receive the promised Messiah. (6.) By the "servants," we are to understand the first preachers of the gospel, proclaiming salvation to the Jews: John the Baptist and the seventy disciples may be here particularly intended. (7.) By the "other servants," the apostles seem to be meant, who, though they were to preach the gospel to the whole world, yet were to begin at Jerusalem with the first offers of mercy. (8.) By their "making light of it"

is pointed out their neglect of this salvation, and their preferring secular enjoyments, &c., to the kingdom of Christ. (9.) By "injuriously using" some, and "slaying" others, of his servants, is pointed out the persecution raised against the apostles by the Jews, in which some of them were martyred. (10.) By "sending forth his troops," is meant the commission given to the Romans against Judea; and "burning up their city," the total destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the son of Vespasian, which happened about forty-one years after.

On this parable it is necessary to remark, (1.) That man was made at first in union with God. (2.) That sin entered in, and separated between God and man. (3.) That as there can be no holiness but in union with God, and no heaven without holiness; therefore he provided a way to reconcile and re-unite man to himself. (4.) This was effected by Christ's uniting himself to human nature, and giving his Spirit to those who believe. (5.) That as the marriage-union is the closest, the most intimate, solemn, and excellent of all the connexions formed among mortals; and that they who are thus united in the Lord are one flesh: So that mystical union which is formed between God and the soul, through Jesus Christ, by the eternal Spirit, is the closest, most intimate, solemn, and excellent that can be conceived; for he who is thus joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (6.) This contract is made freely; no man can be forced to it, for it is a union of will to will, heart to heart; and it is by willing and consenting that we come unto God through his Son. (7.) That if this marriage do not take place here, an eternal separation from God, and from the glory of his power, shall be the fearful consequence. (8.) That there are three states in which men run the risk of living without God, and losing their souls: (i.) That of a soft, idle, voluptuous life, wherein a man thinks of nothing but quietly to enjoy life, conveniences, riches, private pleasures, and public diversions: "They made light of it." (ii.) That of a man wholly taken up with agricultural or commercial employments, in which the love of riches, and application to the means of acquiring them, generally stifle all thoughts of salvation: "One went to his own field, and another to his traffic."

(iii.) That of a man who is openly unjust, violent, and outrageously wicked, who is a sinner by profession, and not only neglects his salvation, but injuriously treats all those who bring him the gospel of reconciliation: "Seizing his servants, they treated them injuriously," &c.

1. *Were not worthy*—Because they "made light of it," and would not come, preferring earthly things to heavenly blessings. A man may be said to be worthy of, or fit for, this marriage-feast, when, feeling his wretchedness and misery, he comes to God in the way appointed, to get an entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

2. *Gathered together all, both bad and good*—By the preaching of the gospel, multitudes of souls are gathered into what is generally termed the visible church of Christ.

3. *When the king came*—When God shall come to judge the world.

4. *Wedding garment*—"It is needless to dispute about the wedding garment, whether it be faith or a pious, holy life; for neither can faith be separated from good works, nor can good works proceed except from faith. Christ's meaning is only, that we are called in order that we may be renewed in our minds after his image; and therefore, that we may remain in his house, the old man, with his filthiness, must be put off, and a new life designed, that our attire may be such as is suitable to so honourable an invitation."—CALVIN.

"Nothing can be more clear, than that as this garment would have constituted the meetness of a man to be received as a guest at the feast, so it must represent all those qualities, collectively, which constitute our meetness for heaven. And as we are so expressly informed, that 'without holiness no man can see the Lord;' and as habits of dress are constantly used figuratively, to express moral habits of the mind and life, the virtues wrought in man by God's Spirit, and exhibited in a course of external obedience to his will; that one word 'holiness' implying, as it does in the Christian sense, both the regeneration of those who have penitently received Christ as the propitiation for sin, and the maturing of all the graces of their new nature by the same influence of the Holy Ghost, will

fully express all that is comprehended by having the wedding or festal robe. If we are thus 'found of him without spot and blameless,' we shall be welcomed 'into the joy of our Lord.'"—R. WATSON.

This marriage-feast, or dinner, (the communication of the graces of the gospel in this life,) prepares for the marriage-supper of the Lamb, Rev. xix. 7—9, the enjoyment of eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. Now, as without holiness no man can see the Lord, we may at once perceive what our Lord means by the marriage-garment,—it is holiness of heart and life. The text last quoted asserts, that the fine, white, and clean linen—alluding to the marriage-garment above mentioned—was an emblem of the "righteousness of the saints." Mark this expression: "The righteousness"—the whole external conduct regulated according to the will and word of God—"of the saints,"—the holy persons whose souls were purified by the blood of the Lamb.

5. *He was speechless*—He had nothing to say in vindication of his neglect. There was a garment provided, but he neither put it on nor applied for it; his conduct, therefore, was, in the highest degree, insulting and indecorous. As this man is the emblem,

by general consent, of those who shall perish in the last day, may we not ask, without offence, Where does the doctrine of absolute reprobation or preterition appear in his case? If Christ had never died for him, or if he had applied for the garment and was refused, might he not well have alleged this in behalf of his soul? and would not the just God have listened to it? But there is not the smallest excuse for him: Christ died, the sacrifice was offered, for him; the ministers of the gospel invited him; the Holy Spirit strove with him; he might have been saved, but he was not; and the fault lies so absolutely at his own door, that the just God is vindicated in his conduct while he sends him to hell, not for the lack of what he could not get, but for the lack of what he might have had, but either neglected or refused it.

6. *Many are called, but few are chosen*—Many are called by the preaching of the gospel into the outward communion of the church of Christ; but few, comparatively, are chosen to dwell with God in glory, because they do not come to the Master of the feast for a marriage-garment; for that holiness without which none can see the Lord. Reader, examine thy soul, and make sure work for eternity.

SECTION CLXXVII.—CHRIST REPLIES TO THE HERODIANS.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXII. 15—22; MARK XII. 13—17;
LUKE XX. 20—26.

THEN went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk. And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, certain of their disciples with the Herodians,¹ which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. And when they were come, they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither carest thou for any man: For thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their wickedness, craftiness, *and* hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me, *ye* hypocrites? shew me the tribute money,

that I may see *it*. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they answered and said unto him, Cæsar's.² Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar³ the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: And they marvelled at his answer,⁴ held their peace, left him, and went their way.

1. *The Herodians*—The preceding parable had covered the Pharisees with confusion: When it was ended they went out, not to humble themselves before God, and deprecate the judgments with which they were threatened; but to plot afresh the destruction of their Teacher. The depth of their malice appears, (1.) In their mode of attack. They had often questioned our Lord on matters concerning religion; and his answers only served to increase his reputation, and their confusion. They now shift their ground, and question him concerning state-affairs; and the question is such as must be answered; and yet the answer, to all human appearance, can be none other than what may be construed into a crime against the people, or against the Roman government. (2.) Their profound malice appears farther in the choice of their companions in this business; namely, the Herodians. Herod was at this very time at Jerusalem, whither he had come to hold the passover. Jesus, being of Nazareth, which was in Herod's jurisdiction, was considered as his subject. Herod himself was extremely attached to the Roman emperor, and made a public profession of it: All these considerations engaged the Pharisees to unite the Herodians, who, as the Syriac intimates, were the domestics of Herod, in this infernal plot. (3.) Their profound malice appears, farther, in the praises they gave our Lord. "Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God." This was indeed the real character of our blessed Lord; and now they bear testimony to the truth, merely with the design to make it subserve their bloody purposes. Those whose hearts are influenced by the spirit of the wicked one never do good, but when they hope to accomplish evil by it. Men who praise you to your face are ever to be suspected. The Italians have a very expressive proverb on this subject: "He

who caresses thee more than he was wont to do, has either deceived thee, or is about to do it." I have never known the sentiment in this proverb to fail; and it was notoriously exemplified in the present instance. Flatterers, though they speak the truth, ever carry about with them a base or malicious soul. (4.) Their malice appears still farther in the question they propose: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" The constitution of the Jewish republic, the expectations which they had of future glory and excellence, and the diversity of opinions which divided the Jews on this subject, rendered an answer to this question extremely difficult: (1.) In the presence of the people, who professed to have no other king but God, and looked on their independence as an essential point of their religion. (2.) In the presence of the Pharisees, who were ready to stir up the people against him, if his decision could be at all construed to be contrary to their prejudices, or to their religious rights. (3.) In the presence of the Herodians, who, if the answer should appear to be against Cæsar's rights, were ready to inflame their master to avenge, by the death of our Lord, the affront offered to his master, the emperor. (4.) The answer was difficult, because of the different sentiments of the Jews on this subject; some maintaining that they could not lawfully pay tribute to a Heathen governor: While others held, that, as they were now under this strange government, and had no power to free themselves from it, it was lawful for them to pay what they had not power to refuse. (5.) The answer was difficult, when it is considered that multitudes of the people had begun now to receive Jesus as the promised Messiah, who was to be the deliverer of their nation from spiritual and temporal oppression, and therefore had lately sung to him the Hosanna Rabba. If, then, he should decide

the question in Cæsar's favour, what idea must the people have of him, either as zealous for the law, or as the expected Messiah? If against Cæsar, he is ruined. Who that loved Jesus, and was not convinced of his sovereign wisdom, could help trembling for him in these circumstances?

Jesus opposes the depth of his wisdom to the depth of their malice, and manifests it: (1.) By unmasking them, and showing that he knew the very secrets of their hearts: "Ye hypocrites! why tempt ye me?" that is, "Why do ye try me thus?" This must cover them with confusion, when they saw their motives thus discovered; and tend much to lessen their influence in the sight of the people, when it was manifest that they acted not through a desire to receive information, by which to regulate their conduct, but merely to ensnare and ruin him. (2.) Christ shows his profound wisdom in not attempting to discuss the question at large; but settled the business by seizing a maxim that was common among all people, and acknowledged among the Jews, "that the prince who causes his image and titles to be stamped on the current coin of a country, is virtually acknowledged thereby as the governor." "Whose is this image and superscription?" He knew well enough whose they were; but he showed the excellency of his wisdom, (3.) In making them answer to their own confusion. They came to ensnare our Lord in his discourse, and now they are ensnared in their own. He who digs a pit for his neighbour, ordinarily falls into it himself.

2. *They said unto him, Cæsar's*—The image was the head of the emperor; the superscription, his titles. Julius Cæsar was the first who caused his image to be struck on the Roman coin. Tiberius was emperor at this time.

3. *Render therefore unto Cæsar*—The conclusion is drawn from their own premises. You acknowledge this to be Cæsar's coin; this coin is current in your land; the currency of this coin shows the country to be under the Roman government; and your acknowledgment that it is Cæsar's, proves you have submitted. Do not therefore be unjust; but render to Cæsar the things which you acknowledge to be his;

at the same time, be not impious, but render unto God the things which belong to God.

This answer is full of consummate wisdom. It establishes the limits, regulates the rights, and distinguishes the jurisdiction, of the two empires of heaven and earth. The image of princes stamped on their coin denotes that temporal things belong all to their government. The image of God stamped on the soul denotes that all its faculties and powers belong to the Most High, and should be employed in his service.

But while the earth is agitated and distracted with the question of political rights and wrongs, the reader will naturally ask, "What does a man owe to Cæsar? to the civil government under which he lives?" Our Lord has answered the question: "That which is Cæsar's." "But what is it that is Cæsar's?" (1.) Honour. (2.) Obedience. And, (3.) Tribute. (1.) The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honour and reverence. (2.) The laws which are made for the apprehension of evil-doers, and the maintenance of good order, which are calculated to promote the benefit of the whole, and the comfort of the individual, should be religiously obeyed. (3.) The government that charges itself with the support and defence of the whole, should have its unavoidable expenses, however great, repaid by the people, in whose behalf they are incurred; therefore we should pay tribute. But remember, if Cæsar should intrude into the things of God, coin a new creed, or broach a new gospel, and affect to rule the conscience, while he rules the state, in these things Cæsar is not to be obeyed; he is taking the things of God, and he must not get them. Give not therefore God's things to Cæsar, and give not Cæsar's things to God. That which belongs to the commonwealth should, on no account whatever, be devoted to religious uses; and let no man think he has pleased God, by giving that to charitable or sacred uses which he has purloined from the state.

4. *And they marvelled at his answer*—And well they might; "never man spake like this man." By this decision, Cæsar is

satisfied ; he gets his own to the uttermost farthing. God is glorified ; his honour is in every respect secured. And the people are edified : One of the most difficult

questions that could possibly come before them is answered in such a way as to relieve their consciences, and direct their conduct.

SECTION CLXXVIII.—CHRIST REPLIES TO THE SADDUCEES.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXII. 23—33 ; MARK XII. 18—27.
LUKE XX. 27—40.

THE same day¹ came to him certain of the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection ; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, and leave *his wife behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren : And the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother : And the second took her to wife, and he died childless : And the third took her likewise ; and in like manner the seven also had her ; and they left no children, and died : And last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of the seven ?² for they all had her to wife. Jesus answered and said unto them, Do ye not therefore err,³ because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God ? The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage : But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage ; neither can they die any more ; for they are as the angels which are in heaven ; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. And as touching the resurrection of the dead, that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed. Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham,⁴ and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? for God is not a God of the dead, but of the living : For all live unto him. Ye therefore do greatly err. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.⁵ Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any *question at all*.

1. *The same day*—Malice is ever active ; let it be defeated ever so often, it returns to the charge. Jesus and his gospel give no quarter to vice ; the vicious will give no quarter to him or it.

2. *Whose wife shall she be of the seven ?*—The question put by these bad men is well suited to the mouth of a libertine. Those who live without God in the world have no other god than the world ;

and those who have not that happiness which comes from the enjoyment of God, have no other pleasure than that which comes from the gratification of sensual appetites. The stream cannot rise higher than the spring: These men, and their younger brethren, atheists, deists, and libertines of all sorts, can form no idea of heaven as a place of blessedness, unless they can hope to find in it the gratification of their sensual desires. On this very ground Mohammed built his paradise.

3. *Do ye not therefore err*—Or, “Ye are deceived,” by your impure passions; not knowing the scriptures, which assert the resurrection; nor the miraculous power of God, by which it is to be effected. Their deception appeared in their supposing, that, if there were a resurrection, men and women were to marry and be given in marriage, as in this life; which our Lord shows is not the case: For men and women, there, shall be like the angels of God, immortal, and free from all human passions, and from those propensities which were to continue with them only during this present state of existence. There, shall be no death; and, consequently, no need of marriage to maintain the population of the spiritual world.

4. *I am the God of Abraham*—Let it be observed, that Abraham was dead upwards of three hundred years before these words were spoken to Moses: Yet still God calls himself the “God of Abraham,” &c. Now Christ properly observes, that God is not the God of the dead, (that word being equal, in the sense of the Sadducees, to an eternal annihilation,) but of the living; it therefore follows that, if he be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, these are not dead, but alive; alive with God; though they had ceased, for some hundred of years, to exist among mortals. We may see, from this, that our Lord combats and confutes another opinion of the Sadducees, namely, “that there is neither angel nor spirit;” by showing that the soul is not only immortal, but lives with God, even while the body is detained in the dust of the earth, which body is afterwards to be raised to life, and united with its soul by the miraculous power of God, of which

power they showed themselves to be ignorant, when they denied the possibility of a resurrection.

5. *The multitude were astonished at his doctrine*—God uses the infidelity of some for the edification of others. Had no false doctrine been broached in the world, we had not seen the full evidence of the true teaching. The opposition of deists and infidels has only served to raise up men in behalf of the truth of God, who not only have refuted them, but shown, at the same time, that the sacred testimonies are infinitely amiable in themselves, and worthy of all acceptance. Truth always gains by being opposed.

(1.) How it can be supposed, that the ancient Jewish church had no distinct notion of the resurrection of the dead, is to me truly surprising. The justice of God, so peculiarly conspicuous under the old covenant, might have led the people to infer, that there must be a resurrection of the dead, if even the passage to which our Lord refers had not made a part of their law. As the body makes a part of the man, justice requires that not only they who are martyrs for the testimony of God, but also all those who have devoted their lives to his service, and died in his yoke, should have their bodies raised again. The justice of God is as much concerned in the resurrection of the dead, as either his power or mercy. To be freed from earthly incumbrances, earthly passions, bodily infirmities, sickness, and death; to be brought into a state of conscious existence, with a refined body and a sublime soul, both immortal, and both ineffably happy—how glorious the privilege! But of this, who shall be counted worthy in that day? Only those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who, by patient continuing in well-doing, have sought for glory and honour and immortality.

(2.) A bad example, supported by the authority, reputation, and majesty of religion, is a very subtle poison, from which it is very difficult for men to preserve themselves. It is a great misfortune for any people to be obliged to beware of those very persons who ought to be their rule and pattern.

SECTION CLXXIX.—CHRIST REPLIES TO THE PHARISEES.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXII. 34—40; MARK XII. 28—34;

BUT when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they *also* were gathered together. And one of them, *which was* a lawyer, came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, Master, which *is* the first *and* the great commandment¹ of all in the law? Jesus answered him, and said unto him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord² thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: This is the first and great commandment.³ And the second *is* like unto it, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour⁴ as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.⁵ And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: For there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

1. *Which is the first and the great commandment*—We see here three kinds of enemies and false accusers of Christ and his disciples; and three sorts of accusations brought against them: (1.) The Herodians, or politicians and courtiers, who form their questions and accusations on the rights of the prince, and matters of state. (2.) The Sadducees, or libertines, who found theirs upon matters of religion, and articles of faith, which they did not credit. (3.) The Pharisees, lawyers, scribes, or Karaites, hypocritical pretenders to devotion, who found theirs on that vital and practical godliness, (the love of God and man,) of which they wished themselves to be thought the sole proprietors.

2. *Thou shalt love the Lord*—This is a subject of the greatest importance, and should be well understood, as our Lord shows that the whole of true religion is

comprised in thus loving God and our neighbour.

Love is "a pleasing surrender of friendship to a friend: An identity or sameness of soul:" A sovereign preference given to one above all others, present or absent: A concentration of all the thoughts and desires in a single object, which a man prefers to all others. Apply this definition to the love which God requires of his creatures, and you will have the most correct view of the subject. Hence it appears that, by this love, the soul eagerly cleaves to, affectionately admires, and constantly rests in God, supremely pleased and satisfied with him as its portion: That it acts from him, as its Author; for him, as its Master; and to him, as its End: That, by it, all the powers and faculties of the mind are concentrated in the Lord of the universe: That, by it, the whole man is willingly surrendered to the Most High:

And that, through it, an identity or sameness of spirit with the Lord is acquired, the man being made a partaker of the divine nature, having the mind in him which was in Christ, and thus dwelling in God, and God in him.

“But what is implied in loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, strength, &c., and when may a man be said to do this?”

(1.) He loves God with all his heart, who loves nothing in comparison of him, and nothing but in reference to him: Who is ready to give up, do, or suffer any thing in order to please and glorify him: Who has in his heart neither love nor hatred, hope nor fear, inclination nor aversion, desire nor delight, but as they relate to God, and are regulated by him. (2.) He loves God with all his soul, or rather with all his life, who is ready to give up life for his sake, to endure all sorts of torments, and to be deprived of all kinds of comforts, rather than dishonour God: Who employs life, with all its comforts and conveniences, to glorify God in, by, and through all: To whom life and death are nothing, but as they come from and lead to God. From this divine principle sprang the blood of the martyrs, which became the seed of the church. “They overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and loved not their lives unto the death.” (3.) He loves God with all his strength, who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God: Who, for the glory of his Maker, spares neither labour nor cost: Who sacrifices his time, body, health, ease, for the honour of God his Divine Maaster: Who employs in his service all his goods, his talents, his power, credit, authority, and influence. (4.) He loves God with all his mind, (intellect,) who applies himself only to know God and his holy will: Who receives with submission, gratitude, and pleasure, the sacred truths which God has revealed to man: Who studies no art nor science but as far as it is necessary for the service of God, and uses it at all times to promote his glory: Who forms no projects nor designs but in reference to God and the interests of mankind: Who banishes from his understanding and memory every useless, foolish, and dangerous thought, together with every idea which has any tendency to defile his soul, or turn it for a

moment from the centre of eternal repose. In a word, he who sees God in all things, thinks of him at all times, having his mind continually fixed upon God, acknowledging him in all his ways; who begins, continues, and ends all his thoughts, words, and works, to the glory of his name: This is the person who loves God with all his heart, life, strength, and intellect. He is crucified to the world, and the world to him: He lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him. He beholds as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory. Simply and constantly looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of his faith, he receives continual supplies of enlightening and sanctifying grace, and is thus fitted for every good word and work. O glorious state! far, far beyond this description! which comprises an ineffable communion between the ever-blessed Trinity and the soul of man!

3. *This is the first and great commandment*—It is so, (1.) In its antiquity, being as old as the world, and engraven originally on our very nature. (2.) In dignity; as directly and immediately proceeding from and referring to God. (3.) In excellence; being the commandment of the new covenant, and the very spirit of the divine adoption. (4.) In justice; because it alone renders to God his due, prefers him before all things, and secures to him his proper rank in relation to them. (5.) In sufficiency; being in itself capable of making men holy in this life, and happy in the other. (6.) In fruitfulness; because it is the root of all commandments, and the fulfilling of the law. (7.) In virtue and efficacy; because by this alone God reigns in the heart of man, and man is united to God. (8.) In extent; leaving nothing to the creature, which it does not refer to the Creator. (9.) In necessity; being absolutely indispensable. (10.) In duration; being ever to be continued on earth, and never to be discontinued in heaven.

4. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*—The love of our neighbour springs from the love of God as its source; is found in the love of God as its principle, pattern, and end; and the love of God is found in the love of our neighbour, as its effect, representation,

and infallible mark. This love of our neighbour is a love of equity, charity, succour, and benevolence. We owe to our neighbour what we have a right to expect from him. "Do unto all men as ye would they should do unto you," is a positive command of our blessed Saviour. By this rule, therefore, we should speak, think, and write, concerning every soul of man; put the best construction upon all the words and actions of our neighbour that they can possibly bear. By this rule we are taught to bear with, love, and forgive him; to rejoice in his felicity, mourn in his adversity, desire and delight in his prosperity, and promote it to the utmost of our power, instruct his ignorance, help him in his weakness, and risk even our life for his sake, and for the public good. In a word, we must do every thing in our power, through all the possible varieties of circum-

stances, for our neighbours, which we would wish them to do for us, were our situations reversed.

This is the religion of Jesus! How happy would society be, were these two plain, rational precepts properly observed! "Love me, and love thy fellows!" Be unutterably happy in me, and be in perfect peace, unanimity, and love, among yourselves. Great Fountain and Dispenser of love, fill thy creation with this sacred principle, for his sake who died for the salvation of mankind!

5. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*—They are like the first and last links of a chain, all the intermediate ones depend on them. True religion begins and ends in love to God and man. These are the two grand links that unite God to man, man to his fellows, and men again to God.

SECTION CLXXX.—JESUS ASKS WHOSE SON CHRIST IS.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXII. 41—46; MARK XII. 35—40;
LUKE XX. 41—47.

WHILE the Pharisees were gathered together,¹ Jesus asked them, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? What think ye of Christ?² whose son is he?³ They say unto him, *The Son* of David.⁴ He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit⁵ call him, in the book of Psalms, Lord; saying 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: If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?⁶ And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*.⁷ And the common people heard him gladly. Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: The same shall receive greater damnation.

1. *While the Pharisees were gathered together*—Jesus asks a question in his turn, utterly to confound them, and to show the people, that the source of all the captious ques-

tions of his opponents was their ignorance of the prophecies relative to the Messiah.

2. *What think ye of Christ?*—Or, "What are your thoughts concerning Christ,

the Messiah?" for to this title the emphatic article should always be added.

3. *Whose son is he?*—From what family is he to spring?

4. *They say unto him, The Son of David*—This was a thing well known among the Jews, and universally acknowledged; and is a most powerful proof against them that the Messiah is come. Their families are now so perfectly confounded, that they cannot trace back any of their genealogies with any degree of certainty; nor have they been capable of ascertaining the different families of their tribes for more than sixteen hundred years. Why, then, should the spirit of prophecy assert so often, and in such express terms, that Jesus was to come from the family of David, if he should only make his appearance when the public registers were all demolished, and it would be impossible to ascertain the family? Is it not evident, that God designed that the Messiah should come at a time when the public genealogies might be inspected, to prove that it was he who was prophesied of, and that no other was to be expected? The evangelists, Matthew and Luke, were so fully convinced of the conclusiveness of this proof, that they had recourse to the public registers; and thus proved to the Jews, from their own records, that Jesus was born of the family mentioned by the prophets. Nor do we find that a scribe, Pharisee, or any other, ever attempted to invalidate this proof, though it would have essentially subserved their cause, could they have done it. But as this has not been done, we may fairly conclude, it was impossible to do it.

"What think ye of Christ? (1.) Do you think him an impostor? Then consider the prophecies which have been fulfilled in him; the predictions spoken by him; the miracles wrought by him, and believe. (2.) Do you think him a mere man, and not God? If so, consider his names, works, attributes; his former glory, honours, and donations. Consider these proofs of his Divinity, and submit to his authority, by engaging in his service, and confiding in his mediation. (3.) Do you think little or nothing concerning him? Consider his gracious remembrance of you, and lament your ingratitude. (4.) Do you now think less of Christ than you formerly

did? If so, consider your fall, and return to him as at first. (5.) Do you think Christ desirable, and long to find him? Then now open your hearts to receive him, and now you will find salvation ready for you. (6.) Do you think and find Christ an inestimable treasure? Then carefully abide in him, steadily walk in him, and hope for his beatific presence."—F. TRUSCOTT.

5. *How then doth David in spirit*—Or, "by the Spirit;" by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, "call him Lord? saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand;" take the place of the greatest eminence and authority: "Till I make thine enemies thy footstool;" till I subdue both Jews and Gentiles under thee, and cause them to acknowledge thee as their Sovereign and Lord. This quotation is taken from Psalm cx. 1; and from it these two points are clear: (1.) That David wrote it by the inspiration of God; and, (2.) That it is a prophetic declaration of the Messiah.

6. *How is he his son?*—As the Jews did not attempt to deny the conclusion of our Lord's question,—which was, The Messiah is not only the Son of David according to the flesh, but he is the Lord of David according to his divine nature,—then it evident they could not. Indeed, there was no other way of invalidating the argument, but by denying that the prophecy in question related to Christ. But it seems the prophecy was so fully and so generally understood to belong to the Messiah, that they did not attempt to do this; for it is immediately added, "No man was able to answer him a word;" they were completely nonplussed and confounded.

7. *Neither durst any ask him any more questions*—The Pharisees and Herodians were defeated; the Sadducees were confounded; the lawyers, or Karaites, nonplussed; and the Pharisees, &c., finally routed. Thus did the wisdom of God triumph over the cunning of men.

From this time we do not find that our Lord was any more troubled with their captious questions: Their whole stock, it appears, was expended; and now they coolly deliberate on the most effectual way to get him murdered. He that resists the truth of God is capable of effecting the worst purpose of satan.

SECTION CLXXXI.—CHARACTER OF THE
PHARISEES.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXIII. 1—22.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : All therefore whatsoever they bid you ¹ observe, *that* observe and do ; but do not ye after their works : For they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens ² and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders ; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men : ³ They make broad their phylacteries, ⁴ and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi : For one is your Master, *even* Christ ; and all ye are brethren. And call no *man* your father ⁵ upon the earth : For one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters : ⁶ For one is your Master, *even* Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself ⁷ shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven ⁸ against men : For ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer : ⁹ Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold ¹⁰ of the temple, he is a debtor ! *Ye* fools and blind : For whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing ; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. *Ye* fools and blind : For whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, ¹¹ sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

1. *All therefore whatsoever they bid you*—That is, all those things which they read out of the law and prophets, and all things which they teach consistently with them. This must be our Lord's meaning: He could not have desired them to do every thing, without restriction, which the Jewish doctors taught; because himself warns his disciples against their false teaching, and testifies that they had made the word of God of none effect by their traditions.

2. *They bind heavy burdens*—They are now so corrupt, that they have added to the ceremonies of the law others of their own invention, which are not only burdensome and oppressive, but have neither reason, expediency, nor revelation, to countenance them. In a word, like all their successors in spirit, to the present day, they were severe to others, but very indulgent to themselves.

3. *All their works they do for to be seen of men*—In pointing out the corruptions of these men, our Lord gives us the distinguishing characteristics of all false teachers, whether Jewish or Christian. (1.) They live not according to the truths they preach: "They say, and do not." (2.) They are severe to others, point out the narrowest road to heaven, and walk in the broad road themselves: "They bind on burdens," &c. (3.) They affect to appear righteous, and are strict observers of certain rites, &c., while destitute of the power of godliness: "They make broad their phylacteries," &c. (4.) They love worldly entertainments, go to feast wherever they are asked, and seek church-preferments: "They love the chief places at feasts, and chief seats in the synagogues." (5.) They love and seek public respect and high titles, "salutations in the market-place," (for they are seldom in their studies,) "and to be called of men, Rabbi,"—eminent teacher,—though they have no title to it, either from the excellence or fruit of their teaching. When these marks are found in a man who professes to be a minister of Christ, charity itself will assert, he is a thief and a robber; he has climbed over the wall of the sheep-fold, or broken it down, in order to get in.

4. *Phylacteries*—These were small slips of parchment, or vellum, on which certain portions of the law were written. The Jews tied these about their foreheads and arms,

for three different purposes: (1.) To put them in mind of those precepts which they should constantly observe. (2.) To procure them reverence and respect in the sight of the Heathen. And, (3.) To act as amulets, or charms to drive away evil spirits.

"When I see one man, while engaged in religious services, transported apparently with feelings of devotion, but, out of those services, his conversation is impure, and his conduct a reproach; when I see another man strict in the observance of certain ceremonies, but destitute of every holy affection, a stranger to the renewal of the soul, like the Pharisees, tithing 'mint, and anise, and cummin,' and, like them, 'omitting the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, mercy, and faith;' when I see another zealous for the particular form of worship he has adopted, for the particular creed he has embraced, and, at the same time, devoted to the world, a lover of pleasure more than of God, and mingling in the scenes of folly and crime; when I see these things, I think I am beholding the frivolous, fruitless, impious attempts of a vile insect, to cheat and impose upon an all-seeing, heart-searching God."—BROMLEY.

5. *Call no man your Father*—By which he gives his disciples to understand, that he would have no second, after himself, established in his church, of which he alone was the Head; and that perfect equality must subsist among them.

6. *Neither be ye called masters*—"Leaders." God is, in all these respects, jealous of his honour. To him alone it belongs to guide and lead his church, as well as to govern and defend it. Jesus is the sole Teacher of righteousness; it is he alone—who is the Word, Light, and eternal Truth—that can illuminate every created mind; and who, as Saviour and Redeemer, speaks to every heart by his Spirit.

7. *Whosoever shall exalt himself, &c.*—The way to arrive at the highest degree of dignity in the sight of God, is, by being willing to become the servant of all. Nothing is more hateful in his sight than pride; to bring it into everlasting contempt, God was manifest in the flesh. He who was in the likeness of God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of

man, and humbled himself unto death. After this, can God look upon any proud man without abasing him? Spiritual lordship and domination, ecclesiastical luxury, pomp, and pride, must be an abhorrence in the sight of that God who gave the above advices to his followers.

Another lesson which our blessed Lord teaches here, is, that no man is implicitly to receive the sayings, doctrines, and decisions of any man, or number of men, in the things which concern the interests of his immortal soul. Christ, his Spirit, and his word, are the only infallible teachers. Every man who wishes to save his soul must search the scriptures by prayer and faith. Reader, take counsel with the pious, hear the discourses of the wise and holy; but let the book of God ultimately fix thy creed.

8. *Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven*—As a key, by opening a lock, gives entrance into a house, &c., so knowledge of the sacred testimonies, manifested in expounding them to the people, may be said to open the way into the kingdom of heaven. But where men who are termed “teachers” are destitute of this knowledge themselves, they may be said to shut this kingdom; because they occupy the place of those who should teach, and thus prevent the people from acquiring heavenly knowledge.

9. *Make long prayer*—“God takes not men’s prayers by tale, but by weight. He respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, the

sweetness of our voice; nor the logic of our prayers, or the method of them; but the divinity of our prayers is that which he so much esteemeth.”—JOHN TRAPP.

10. *Whosoever shall swear by the gold*—“The covetous man,” says one, “still gives preference to the object of his lust; gold has still the first place in his heart. A man is to be suspected, when he recommends those good works most from which he receives most advantage.” “Is bound thereby;” that is, to fulfil his oath.

11. *Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar*—As an oath always supposes a person who witnesses it, and will punish perjury, therefore, whether they swore by the temple or the gold, or by the altar or the gift laid on it, the oath necessarily supposed the God of the temple, of the altar, and of gifts, who witnessed the whole, and would, even in their exempt cases, punish the perjury. All this was common swearing; and, whether the subject was true or false, the oath was unlawful. A common swearer is worthy of no credit when, even in the most solemn manner, he takes an oath before a magistrate; he is so accustomed to stake his truth, perhaps even his soul, to things, whether true or false, that an oath cannot bind him, and, indeed, is as little respected by himself as it is by his neighbour. Common swearing, and the shocking frequency and multiplication of oaths in civil cases, have destroyed all respect for an oath; so that men seldom feel themselves bound by it, and thus it is useless in many cases to require it as a confirmation, in order to end strife, or ascertain truth.

SECTION CLXXXII.—CONTINUED WOES AGAINST THE PHARISEES.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXIII. 23—39.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint¹ and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment,² mercy, and faith: These ought ye to have done,³ and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside⁴ of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and

excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men,⁵ but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers⁶ with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses⁷ unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then⁸ the measure of your fathers. *Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers,⁹ how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore,¹⁰ behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: And *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,¹¹ *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

1. *Ye pay tithes of mint, &c.*—They were remarkably scrupulous in the performance of all the rites and ceremonies of religion, but totally neglected the soul, spirit, and practice of godliness.

2. *Judgment*—Acting according to justice and equity towards all mankind. "Mercy," to the distressed and miserable. "And faith" in God, as the Fountain of all righteousness, mercy, and truth. The scribes and Pharisees neither begun nor ended their works in God; nor had they any respect unto his name in doing them. They did them to be seen of men, and they had their reward—human applause.

3. *These ought ye to have done, &c.*—Our Lord did not object to their paying tithe, even of common pot-herbs, this did

not affect the spirit of religion; but while they did this and such like, to the utter neglect of justice, mercy, and faith, they showed that they had no religion, and knew nothing of its nature.

4. *Ye make clean the outside*—The Pharisees were exceedingly exact in observing all the washings and purifications prescribed by the law; but paid no attention to that inward purity which was typified by them. A man may appear clean without, who is unclean within; but outward purity will not avail in the sight of God, where inward holiness is wanting.

5. *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men*—But what will this appearance avail a man, when God sits in judgment upon his soul? Will the fair

reputation which he had acquired among men, while his heart was the seat of unrighteousness, screen him from the stroke of that justice which impartially sends all impurity and unholiness into the pit of destruction? No. In the sin that he hath sinned, and in which he hath died, and according to that, shall he be judged and punished; and his profession of holiness only tends to sink him deeper into the lake which burns with unquenchable fire. Reader! see that thy heart be right with God.

6. *We would not have been partakers*—They imagined themselves much better than their ancestors; but our Lord, who knew what they would do, uncovers their hearts, and shows them that they are about to be more abundantly vile than all who had ever preceded them.

7. *Ye be witnesses*—Ye acknowledge that ye are the children of those murderers, and ye are about to give full proof that ye are not degenerated.

There are many who think that, had they lived in the time of our Lord, they would not have acted towards him as the Jews did. But we can scarcely believe that they who reject his gospel, trample under foot his precepts, do despite to the Spirit of his grace, love sin, and hate his followers, would have acted otherwise to him than the murdering Jews, had they lived in the same times.

8. *Fill ye up then*—Notwithstanding the profession you make, you will fill up the measure of your fathers—will continue to walk in their way, accomplish the fulness of every evil purpose by murdering me; and then, when the measure of your iniquity is full, vengeance shall come upon you to the uttermost, as it did on your rebellious ancestors.

9. *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers*—What a terrible stroke! Ye are serpents, and the offspring of serpents. They confessed that they were the children of those who murdered the prophets; and they are now going to murder Christ and his followers, to show that they have not degenerated; an accursed seed, of an accursed breed!

10. *Wherefore*—To show how my prediction, "Ye will fill up the measure of your fathers," shall be verified, "Behold, I send," (I am just going to commission

them,) "prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some ye will kill," (with legal process,) and some ye will "crucify," pretend to try and find guilty, and deliver them into the hands of the Romans, who shall, through you, thus put them to death. By "prophets, wise men, and scribes," our Lord intends the evangelists, apostles, deacons, &c., who should be employed in proclaiming his gospel; men who should equal the ancient prophets, their wise men, and scribes, in all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

11. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*—(1.) It is evident that our blessed Lord seriously and earnestly wished the salvation of the Jews. (2.) That he did every thing that could be done, consistently with his own perfections, and the liberty of his creatures, to effect this. (3.) That his tears over the city sufficiently evince his sincerity. (4.) That these persons nevertheless perished. And, (5.) That the reason was, they would not be gathered together under his protection; therefore wrath, that is, punishment, came upon them to the uttermost. From this it is evident, that there have been persons whom Christ wished to save, and bled to save, who notwithstanding perished, because they would not come unto him. The metaphor which our Lord uses here is a very beautiful one. When the hen sees a beast of prey coming, she makes a noise to assemble her chickens, that she may cover them with her wings from the danger. The Roman eagle is about to fall upon the Jewish state; nothing can prevent this but their conversion to God through Christ; Jesus cries throughout the land, publishing the gospel of reconciliation; they would not assemble, and the Roman eagle came and destroyed them.

How long had these thankless and unholy people been the objects of his tenderest cares! For more than two thousand years, they engrossed the most peculiar regards of the most beneficent Providence; and during the three years of our Lord's public ministry, his preaching and miracles had but one object and aim, the instruction and salvation of this thoughtless and disobedient people. For their sakes, he who was rich became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich: For their sakes, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon

him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! He died, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life. Thus, to save their life, he freely abandoned his own.

Our Lord plainly foresaw, that, in process of time, a spiritual domination would arise in his church; and, to prevent its evil influence, he leaves the strong warnings against it which are contained in the former part of this chapter. As the religion of Christ is completely spiritual, and the influence by which it is produced and maintained must come from heaven; therefore, there could be no master or head but himself: For as the church (the assemblage of true believers) is his body, all its intelligence, light, and life, must proceed from him alone.

From the 13th to the 39th verse, our Lord pronounces eight woes, or rather pathetic declarations, against the scribes and Pharisees:—

(1.) For their unwillingness to let the common people enjoy the pure word of God, or its right explanation: "Ye shut up the kingdom," &c.

(2.) For their rapacity, and pretended sanctity, in order to secure their secular ends: "Ye devour widows' houses," &c.

(3.) For their pretended zeal to spread the kingdom of God by making proselytes, when they had no other end in view than forming instruments for the purposes of their oppression and cruelty: "Ye compass sea and land," &c.

(4.) For their bad doctrine and false interpretations of the scriptures, and their dispensing with the most solemn oaths and vows at pleasure: "Ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing," &c.

(5.) For their superstition in scrupulously attending to little things, and things not commanded, and omitting matters of great importance, the practice of which God had especially enjoined: "Ye pay tithe of mint and cummin," &c.

(6.) For their hypocrisy, pretended saintship, and endeavouring to maintain decency in their outward conduct, while they had no

other object in view than to deceive the people, and make them acquiesce in their oppressive measures: "Ye make clean the outside of the cup."

(7.) For the depth of their inward depravity and abomination, having nothing good, fair, or supportable, but the mere outside. Most hypocrites and wicked men have some good: But these were radically and totally evil: "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

(8.) For their pretended concern for the holiness of the people, which proceeded no farther than to keep them free from such pollutions as they might accidentally and innocently contract, by casually stepping on the place where a person had been buried; and for their affected regret that their fathers had killed the prophets, while themselves possessed and cultivated the same murderous inclinations: "Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been," &c.

It is amazing with what power and authority our blessed Lord reproves this bad people. This was the last discourse they ever heard from him; and it is surprising, considering their wickedness, that they waited even for a mock trial, and did not rise up at once and destroy him. But the time was not yet come in which he was to lay down his life; for no man could take it from him.

While he appears, in this last discourse, with all the authority of a Lawgiver and Judge, he at the same time shows the tenderness and compassion of a Friend and a Father: He beholds their awful state; his eye affects his heart, and he weeps over them! Were not the present hardness and final perdition of these ungodly men entirely of themselves? Could Jesus, as the Supreme God, have fixed their reprobation from all eternity by any necessitating decree; and yet weep over the unavoidable consequences of his own sovereign determinations? How absurd as well as shocking is the thought!

SECTION CLXXXIII.—CHRIST APPLAUDS A POOR WIDOW.

A.D. 29.

MARK XII. 41—44; LUKE XXI. 1—4.

AND Jesus sat over against the treasury; and he looked up, and beheld how the people cast money *and* their gifts into the treasury: And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow,¹ and she threw in thither two mites, which make a farthing. And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all these did cast in of their abundance unto the offerings of God: But she of her penury did cast in all that she had,² *even* all her living.

1. *A certain poor widow*—A widow “miserably poor;” this is the proper import of the word; and her being miserably poor heightened the merit of the action. Our term “mite” seems to have been taken from the animal called by that name; for as that appeared to our ancestors to be the smallest of all animals, so this, being the smallest of all coins, was called by its name.

Let us examine this subject a little more closely: Jesus prefers the widow’s two mites to all the offerings made by the rich. It is said, “Jesus beheld how the people cast money into the treasury.” To make this relation the more profitable, let us consider, I. Christ the Observer, and, II. Christ the Judge, of human actions.

I. CHRIST THE OBSERVER OF HUMAN ACTIONS.

(1.) Christ observes all men and all things. All our actions are before his eyes; what we do in public, and what we do in private, are equally known unto him.

(2.) He observes the state and situation we are in. His eye was upon the abundance of the rich who had given much; and he was well acquainted with the poverty and desolate state of the widow who had given her all, though that was but little in itself. What an awful thought for the rich! “God sees every penny I possess, and constantly observes how I lay it out.” What a comfortable thought for the poor and desolate! “The eye of the most merciful and bountiful Jesus continually beholds my

poverty and distress, and will cause them to work for my good.”

(3.) Christ sees all the motives which lead men to perform their respective actions; and the different motives which lead them to perform the same action. He knows whether they act through vanity, self-love, interest, ambition, hypocrisy; or whether through love, charity, zeal for his glory, and a hearty desire to please him.

(4.) He observes the circumstances which accompany our actions; whether we act with care or negligence; with a ready mind, or with reluctance.

(5.) He observes the judgment which we form of that which we do in his name; whether we esteem ourselves more on account of what we have done; speak of it to others; dwell on our labours, sufferings, expenses, success, &c.; or whether we humble ourselves because we have done so little good, and even that little in so imperfect a way.

II. CHRIST THE JUDGE OF HUMAN ACTIONS.

(1.) He appears surprised that so much piety should be found with so much poverty in this poor widow.

(2.) He shows that works of charity, &c., should be estimated, not by their appearance, but by the spirit which produces them.

(3.) He shows by this, that all men are properly in a state of equality; for though there is and ought to be a difference in outward things, yet God looks upon the heart;

and the poorest person has it in his power to make his mite as acceptable to the Lord, by simplicity of intention, and purity of affection, as the millions given by the affluent. It is just in God to rate the value of an action by the spirit in which it is done.

(4.) He shows that men should judge impartially in cases of this kind; and not permit themselves to be carried away to decide for a person by the largeness of the gift on the one hand, or against him by the smallness of the bounty on the other. Of the poor widow it is said, she has cast in more than all the rich; because, (i.) She gave more; she gave her all, and they gave only a part. (ii.) She did this in a better spirit, having a simple desire to please God. Never did any king come near the liberality of this widow; she gave all that she had, "her whole life;" that is, all that she had to provide for one day's sustenance, and

could have no more till by her labour she had acquired it. What trust must there be in the Divine Providence to perform such an act as this!

2. *But she did cast in all that she had*—Two important lessons may be learnt from her conduct. (1.) A lesson of humiliation to the rich, who, by reason of covetousness on the one hand, and luxury on the other, give but little to God and the poor. (2.) A lesson of reproof to the poor, who, through distrust of God's providence, give nothing at all. Our possessions can only be sanctified by giving a portion to God. There will be infallibly a blessing in the remainder, when a part has been given to God and the poor. If the rich and the poor reflect seriously on this, the one will learn pity, the other liberality; and both be blessed in their deed. He must be a poor man indeed, who cannot find one poorer than himself.

SECTION CLXXXIV.—CHRIST FORETELLS THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXIV. 1—14; MARK XIII. 1—13;
LUKE XXI. 5—19.

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: And his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple; and some spake, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts; and one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!* And Jesus answering said unto him, See ye not all these things? these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, *as for* these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left here one stone¹ upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, the disciples, Peter and James and John and Andrew came unto him privately, and asked him, saying, Master, but tell us, when shall these things be?² and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.³ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near; and shall deceive many: Go ye not therefore after them. And ye shall hear of wars,⁴ and rumours of wars. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of

wars, and commotions, see that ye be not terrified *and* troubled : For all these things must first come to pass ; but the end *shall* not *be* yet. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : And great earthquakes shall be in divers places ; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and troubles ; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. All these *are* the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves : For before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, *and* deliver you up to councils,⁵ and to the synagogues, and into prisons, to be afflicted ; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten : And ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my name's sake ; and they shall kill you : And ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony against them. But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, settle *it* therefore in your hearts, *and* take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate : But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye : For it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son ; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends ; and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.⁶ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.⁷ But he that shall endure⁸ unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world⁹ for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come.

THIS chapter contains a prediction of the utter destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and the subversion of the whole political constitution of the Jews ; and is one of the most valuable portions of the new-covenant scriptures, with respect to the evidence which it furnishes of the truth of Christianity. Every thing which our Lord foretold should come on the temple, city, and people of the Jews, has been fulfilled in the most correct and astonishing manner ; and witnessed by a writer who was present during the whole, who was

himself a Jew, and is acknowledged to be a historian of indisputable veracity in all those transactions which concern the destruction of Jerusalem. Without having designed it, he has written a commentary on our Lord's words, and shown how every tittle was punctually fulfilled, though he knew nothing of the scripture which contained this remarkable prophecy.

1. *There shall not be left here one stone* —These seem to have been the last words he spoke as he left the temple, into which he never afterwards entered ; and, when he

got to the mount of Olives, he renewed the discourse. From this mount, on which our Lord and his disciples now sat, the whole of the city, and particularly the temple, were clearly seen. This part of our Lord's prediction was fulfilled in the most literal manner.

The temple was destroyed, (1.) Justly; because of the sins of the Jews. (2.) Mercifully; to take away from them the occasion of continuing in Judaism. And, (3.) Mysteriously; to show that the ancient sacrifices were abolished, and that the whole Jewish economy was brought to an end, and the Christian dispensation introduced.

2. *Tell us, when shall these things be?*—There appear to be three questions asked here by the disciples: (1.) "When shall these things be?" namely, the destruction of the city, temple, and Jewish state. (2.) "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" namely, to execute these judgments upon them, and to establish thy own church. And, (3.) "When shall this world end?" When wilt thou come to judge the quick and the dead?

3. *Take heed that no man deceive you*—The world is full of deceivers; and it is only by taking heed to the counsel of Christ that even his followers can escape being ruined by them. From this to verse 31, our Lord mentions the signs which should precede his coming.

4. *And ye shall hear of wars, &c.*—From the calamities of the nation in general, our Lord passes to those of the Christians; and, indeed, the sufferings of his followers were often occasioned by the judgments sent upon the land, as the poor Christians were charged with being the cause of these national calamities, and were cruelly persecuted on that account.

5. *Deliver you up to councils*—Ye shall be delivered up to councils, and be beaten in synagogues, and ye shall stand before governors and kings for my name's sake. Be not anxiously careful beforehand what ye shall speak; for ye are not the speakers, but the Holy Spirit will speak by you: I will give you utterance and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to contradict or resist. We need go no farther than the Acts of the Apostles for the completion of these particulars. Some were

delivered to councils; as Peter and John. Some were brought before rulers and kings; as Paul before Gallio, before Felix, before Festus and Agrippa. Some had utterance and wisdom which their adversaries were not able to resist; so Stephen, and Paul, who made even Felix himself tremble. Some were imprisoned; as Peter and John. Some were beaten; as Paul and Silas. Some were put to death; as Stephen, and James the brother of John. But if we look beyond the book of the Acts of the Apostles, to the bloody persecutions under Nero, we shall find these predictions still more amply fulfilled: In these, numberless Christians fell, besides those two champions of the faith, Peter and Paul. And it was a war against the very name of Christ; for he who was called Christian had committed crime enough, in bearing the name, to be put to death. So true were our Saviour's words, that they should be hated of all men for his name's sake!

6. *In your patience possess ye your souls*—"Little more is wanting than the truth of piety, to enable a Christian to stand against the ordinary allurements and discouragements of life. But when a man is beset and completely surrounded with more than ordinary distresses and hazard, especially when he is marked out as the butt for the enemies of the Redeemer to shoot at, the rock which the furious waves of tribulation are to lash, the tree of righteousness, on which the storms of temptation are to expend themselves; then we may be bold to say, that nothing but patience, or an ability to abide for any length of time under the greatest possible pressure, can preserve us."—
JOHN BURDSALL.

7. *The love of many shall wax cold*—By reason of these trials and persecutions from without, and those apostasies and false prophets from within, the love of many to Christ and his doctrine, and to one another, shall grow cold; some openly deserting the faith, others corrupting it, and others growing indifferent about it. Even at this early period there seems to have been a very considerable defection in several Christian churches.

8. *But he that shall endure*—The persecutions that shall come. "Unto the end;" to the destruction of the Jewish polity, without growing cold or apostatizing.

“ Shall be saved ;” shall be delivered in all imminent dangers, and have his soul at last brought to an eternal glory. It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city ; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself master of it ; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape.

9. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world*—Notwithstanding these persecutions, there shall be an universal publication of the “ glad tidings of the kingdom, for a testimony to all nations.” God would have the iniquity of the Jews published every where, before the heavy stroke of his judgments should fall upon them ; that all mankind, as it were, might be brought as witnesses against their cruelty and obstinacy in crucifying and rejecting the Lord Jesus.

SECTION CLXXXV.—DREADFUL CALAMITIES PREDICTED.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXIV. 15—28 ; MARK XIII. 14—23 ;
LUKE XXI. 20—24.

AND when ye therefore shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh, *that is*, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand :) Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains ;¹ and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto ; and let him which is on the house top not come down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house ; and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days ! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter,² neither on the sabbath day :³ For in those days shall be great tribulation,⁴ such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, no, nor ever shall be. For there shall be great distress in the land, affliction and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And except that the Lord had shortened those days,⁵ there should no flesh be saved : But for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, those days shall be shortened. And then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ ;⁶ or, lo, *he is* there ; believe *him* not : For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if *it were*

possible, they shall deceive the very elect. But take ye heed : Behold, I have foretold you all things. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert ; ⁷ go not forth : Behold, *he is* in the secret chambers ; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; ⁸ so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, ⁹ there will the eagles ¹⁰ be gathered together.

1. *Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains*—This counsel was remembered and wisely followed by the Christians afterwards. At this juncture, after Cestius Gallus had raised the siege, and Vespasian was approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem, and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan ; and so they all marvellously escaped the general shipwreck of their country : Not one of them perished.

2. *And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter*—For the hardness of the season, the badness of the roads, the shortness of the days, and the length of the nights, will all be great impediments to your flight.

3. *Neither on the sabbath day*—That you may not raise the indignation of the Jews by travelling on that day, and so suffer that death out of the city which you had endeavoured to escape from within. Besides, on the sabbath-days, the Jews not only kept within doors, but the gates of all the cities and towns in every place were kept shut and barred ; so that, if their flight should be on a sabbath, they could not expect admission into any place of security in the land.

4. *For in those days shall be great tribulation*—No history can furnish us with a parallel to the calamities and miseries of the Jews : Rapine, murder, famine, and pestilence within : Fire and sword, and all the horrors of war, without. Our Lord wept at the foresight of these calamities ; and it is almost impossible for any humane person to read the relation of them in Josephus without weeping also. St. Luke calls these the “days of vengeance, that all things which were written might be fulfilled.” (1.) These were the days in which all the calamities predicted by Moses, Joel, Daniel, and other prophets, as well as those predicted by our Saviour, met in one

common centre, and were fulfilled in the most terrible manner on that generation.

(2.) These were the days of vengeance in another sense, as if God’s judgments had certain periods and revolutions ; for it is remarkable that the temple was burned by the Romans in the same month, and on the same day of the month, on which it had been burned by the Babylonians.

5. *Except that the Lord had shortened those days*—Josephus computes the number of those who perished in the siege at eleven hundred thousand, besides those who were slain in other places.

6. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ*—Our Lord had cautioned his disciples against false Christs and prophets before ; but he seems here to intimate, that there would be especial need to attend to this caution about the time of the siege. And in fact many such impostors did arise about that time, promising deliverance from God ; and the lower the Jews were reduced, the more disposed they were to listen to such deceivers. Like a man drowning, they were willing to catch even at a straw, while there was any prospect of being saved.

7. *If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert*—Is it not worthy of remark, that our Lord not only foretold the appearance of these impostors, but also the manner and circumstances of their conduct ?

8. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west*—It is worthy of remark, that our Lord, in the most particular manner, points out the very march of the Roman army : They entered into Judæa on the east, and carried on their conquests westward, as if not only the extensiveness of the ruin, but the very route which the army would take, were intended in the comparison of the “lightning issuing from the east, and shining to the west.”

9. *For wheresoever the carcass is—* “The dead carcass.” The Jewish nation, which was morally and judicially dead.

10. *There will the eagles—*The Roman armies, called so partly from their strength and fierceness, and partly from the figure of these animals which was always wrought

on their ensigns, or even in brass, placed on the tops of their ensign-staves. It is remarkable that the Roman fury pursued these wretched men wheresoever they were found. They were a dead carcass doomed to be devoured; and the Roman eagles were the commissioned devourers.

SECTION CLXXXVI.—THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH POLITY.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXIV. 29—36; MARK XIII. 24—32;
LUKE XXI. 25—33.

BUT immediately after the tribulation¹ of those days there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven; and upon the earth shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: For the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man² in heaven: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And then shall he send his angels³ with a great sound of a trumpet,⁴ and they shall gather together his elect⁵ from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable, *saying*, Now learn a parable of the fig-tree:⁶ Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When *their* branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand, *even* at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass⁷ away, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: But my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only.

1. *Immediately after the tribulation, &c.*—Commentators generally understand this, and what follows, of the end of the world and Christ's coming to judgment: But the word immediately shows that our Lord is

not speaking of any distant event, but of something immediately consequent on calamities already predicted; and that must be the destruction of Jerusalem. “The Jewish heaven shall perish, and the sun

and moon of its glory and happiness shall be darkened—brought to nothing. The sun is the religion of the church; the moon is the government of the state; and the stars are the judges and doctors of both."

"Matthew and Mark were incontestably dead before the events here predicted took place, as Luke also probably might be; and as for John, the only evangelist who survived them, it is remarkable that he says nothing of them, lest any should say the prophecy was forged after the events happened."—GILBERT WEST.

2. *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man*—The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will, in consequence of this manifestation of God, be led to acknowledge Christ and his religion.

3. *Shall he send his angels*—"His messengers," the apostles, and their successors in the Christian ministry.

4. *With a great sound of a trumpet*—Or, "a loud-sounding trumpet;" the earnest, affectionate call of the gospel of peace, life, and salvation.

5. *Shall gather together his elect*—The Gentiles, who were now chosen or elected, in place of the rebellious, obstinate Jews, according to our Lord's prediction, Matt. viii. 11, 12, and Luke xiii. 28, 29. "For the children of the kingdom (the Jews, who were born with a legal right to it, but had now finally forfeited that right by their iniquities) should be thrust out." It is worth serious observation, that the Chris-

tian religion spread and prevailed mightily after this period: And nothing contributed more to the success of the gospel than the destruction of Jerusalem happening in the very time and manner, and with the very circumstances, so particularly foretold by our Lord. It was after this period that the kingdom of Christ began, and his reign was established in almost every part of the world.

6. *Learn a parable of the fig-tree*—That is, These signs which I have given you will be as infallible a proof of the approaching ruin of the Jewish state, as the budding of the trees is a proof of the coming summer.

7. *This generation shall not pass*—"This race;" that is, the Jews shall not cease from being a distinct people, till all the counsels of God relative to them and the Gentiles be fulfilled. Some translate it, "this generation," meaning the persons who were then living, that they should not die before these signs, &c., took place: But though this was true, as to the calamities that fell upon the Jews, and the destruction of their government, temple, &c., yet as our Lord mentions Jerusalem's continuing to be under the power of the Gentiles till the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, that is, till all the nations of the world should receive the gospel of Christ, after which the Jews themselves should be converted unto God, I think it more proper not to restrain its meaning to the few years which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem; but to understand it of the care taken by divine providence to preserve them as a distinct people, and yet to keep them out of their own land, and from their temple-service.

SECTION CLXXXVII.—THE TWO SERVANTS.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXIV. 37—51; MARK XIII. 33—37;
LUKE XXI. 34—36.

BUT as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking,¹ marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not² until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then

shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be grinding at the mill* ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.³ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore,⁴ take ye heed, and pray always ; that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man : For ye know not when the time is, or what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready : For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. *For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.* Who then is a faithful and wise servant,⁵ whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season ? Blessed is that servant,⁶ whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.⁷ But and if that evil servant⁸ shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ; and shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken ; the lord of that servant⁹ shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder,¹⁰ and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites : There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Watch ye therefore : For ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning : Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.¹¹ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

1. *As in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking*—That is, they spent their time in rapine, luxury, and riot. The design of these verses seems to be, that the desolation should be as general as it should be unexpected.

2. *And knew not*—“ They considered not ; ” did not lay Noah's warning to heart, till it was too late to profit by it : “ So shall it be,” and so it was, in this coming of the Son of Man.

3. *Then shall two men,—two women ; one shall be taken, and the other left*—The meaning seems to be, that so general should

these calamities be, that no two persons, wheresoever found, or about whatsoever employed, should be both able to effect their escape ; and that captivity and the sword should have a complete triumph over this unhappy people.

4. *Watch ye therefore*—Be always on your guard, that you may not be taken unawares, and that you may be properly prepared to meet God in the way either of judgment or mercy, whensoever he may come. This advice the followers of Christ took, and therefore they escaped ; the miserable Jews rejected it, and were destroyed. Let us

learn wisdom by the things which they suffered. The more the Master is expected, the more diligent ought the servants to be in working, watching, and keeping themselves in readiness. Can one who has received the sentence of his death, and has no right to live a moment, need any admonition to prepare to die? Does not a prisoner who expects his deliverance hold himself in continual readiness to leave his dungeon?

5. *Who then is a faithful and wise servant*—All should live in the same expectation of the coming of Christ which a servant has with respect to the return of his master, who, in departing for a season, left the management of his affairs to him; and of which management he is to give an exact account on his master's return.

Here is an abstract of the duties of a minister of Christ: (1.) He is appointed, not by himself, but by the vocation and mission of his Master. (2.) He must look on himself, not as the master of the family, but as the servant. (3.) He must be scrupulously faithful, and exact in fulfilling the commands of his Master. (4.) His fidelity must be ever accompanied by wisdom and prudence. (5.) He must give the domestics, the sacred family, their food; and this food must be such as to afford them true nourishment. And, (6.) This must be done in its season. There are certain portions of the bread of life which lose their effect by being administered out of proper season, or to improper persons.

6. *Blessed is that servant*—His blessedness consists in his Master's approbation.

7. *He shall make him ruler over all his goods*—O heavenly privilege of a faithful minister of Christ! He shall receive from God a power to dispense all the blessings of the new covenant; and his word shall ever be accompanied with the demonstration of the Holy Ghost to the hearts of all that hear it. Much of a preacher's usefulness may be lost by his unfaithfulness.

8. *But and if that evil servant*—Here are three characters of a bad minister: (1.) He has little or no faith in the speedy coming of Christ, either to punish for wickedness, or to pardon and sanctify those who believe. It may be, he does not outwardly profess this, but he says it in his heart; and God searches his heart, and knows that he professes to teach what he does not believe.

(2.) He governs with an absolute dominion, oppressing his colleagues, and doing violence to the followers of Christ: "And shall begin to smite," &c. (3.) He leads an irregular life; does not love the company of the children of God, but eats and drinks with the drunkards, preferring the tables of the great and the rich, whose god is their belly, and thus feeds himself without fear. Great God! save thine inheritance from being ravaged by such wolves!

9. *The lord of that servant*—Here are three punishments which answer to the three characteristics of the bad minister: (1.) A sudden death, and the weight of God's judgments falling upon him, without a moment to avert it; this answers to his infidelity and forgetfulness. "He shall come in a day when he looketh not for him." (2.) A separation from the communion of saints, and from all the gifts which he has abused; this answers to the abuse of his authority in the church of Christ. (3.) He shall have tears and eternal pains, in company with all such hypocrites as himself; and this answers to his voluptuous life, pampering the flesh at the expense of the soul.

10. *Cut him asunder*—This refers to an ancient mode of punishment used in several countries. Isaiah is reported to have been sawed asunder.

11. *Let him find you sleeping*—A porter asleep exposes the house to be robbed, and well deserves punishment. No wonder that the man is constantly suffering loss who is frequently off his guard.

Our Lord shows us in this parable, (1.) That himself, ascended to heaven, is the man gone from home. (2.) That believers collectively are his family. (3.) That his servants are those who are employed in the work of faith and labour of love. (4.) That the porter represents the ministers of his gospel, who should continually watch for the safety and welfare of the whole flock. (5.) That every one has his own work, that which belongs to himself and to none other, and for the accomplishment of which he receives sufficient strength from his Lord. (6.) That these servants and porters shall give an account to their Lord, how they have exercised themselves in their respective departments. (7.) And that, as the Master of the family will certainly come to

require this account at a time when men are not aware, therefore they should be always watchful and faithful. And, (8.) That this is a duty incumbent on every soul of man: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" If after all these warnings, the followers of God be found careless, their misery and condemnation must be great.

The reader has, no doubt, observed, in the preceding chapter, a series of the most striking and solemn predictions, fulfilled in the most literal, awful, and dreadful manner. Christ has foretold the ruin of the Jewish people, and the destruction of their polity; and in such a circumstantial manner as none else could do, but He, under whose eye are all events, and in whose hands are the government and direction of all things. Indeed, he rather declared what he would do, than predicted what should come to pass. And the fulfilment has been as circumstantial as the prediction. Does it not appear, that the predicted point was so literally referred to by the occurring fact, by which it was to have its accomplishment, as to leave no room to doubt the truth of the prediction, or the certainty of the event by which it was fulfilled? Thus the wisdom of God, as also his justice and providence, have had a plenary manifestation.

But this wisdom appears, farther, in preserving such a record of the prediction, and such evidence of its accomplishment, as cannot possibly be doubted. The New Testament, given by the inspiration of God, and handed down uncorrupted from father to son, by both friends and enemies, perfect in its credibility and truth, inexpugnable in its evidences, and astonishingly circumstantial in details of future occurrences, which the wisdom of God alone could foreknow,—that New Testament is the record of these predictions. The history of the Romans, written by so many hands; the history of the Jews, written by one of themselves;

triumphal arches, coins, medals, and public monuments of different kinds, are the evidence by which the fulfilment of the record is demonstrated. Add to this, the preservation of the Jewish people; a people scattered through all nations, yet subsisting as a distinct body, without temple, sacrifices, or political government; and who, while they attempt to suppress the truth, yet reluctantly stand forth as an unimpeachable collateral evidence, that the solemn record, already alluded to, is strictly and literally true. Who that has ever consulted the Roman historians of the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, the history of Josephus, and the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and who knows any thing of the present state of the Jews over the face of the earth, or even of those who sojourn in England, can doubt for a moment the truth of this Gospel, or the infinite and all-comprehensive knowledge of Him who is its Author? Here, then, is one portion of divine revelation that is incontrovertibly and absolutely proved to be the truth of God. Reader, if he who, while he predicted the ruin of this disobedient and refractory people, wept over their city and its inhabitants, has so minutely fulfilled the threatenings of his justice on the unbelieving and disobedient, will he not as circumstantially fulfil the promises of his grace to all them that believe? The existence of his revelation, the continuance of a Christian church upon earth, the certainty that there is one individual saved from his sins by the grace of the gospel, and walking worthy of his vocation, are continued proofs and evidences that he is still the same; that he will fulfil every jot and tittle of that word on which he has caused thee to trust; and save to the uttermost all that come unto the Father by him. The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

SECTION CLXXXVIII.—THE TEN VIRGINS.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXV. 1—13.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins,^t which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise,² and five *were* foolish.³ They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels⁴ with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried,⁵ they all slumbered and slept.⁶ And at midnight there was a cry⁷ made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh;⁸ go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.⁹ And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.¹⁰ But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you:¹¹ But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came;¹² and they that were ready¹³ went in with him to the marriage: And the door was shut.¹⁴ Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord,¹⁵ open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.¹⁶ Watch therefore,¹⁷ for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

1. *Virgins*—Denoting the purity of the Christian doctrine and character. In this parable, the "Bridegroom" is generally understood to mean Jesus Christ; the "feast," that state of felicity to which he has promised to raise his genuine followers; the "wise," or prudent, and "foolish virgins," those who truly enjoy, and those who only profess, the purity and holiness of his religion; the "oil," the grace and salvation of God, or that faith which works by love; the "vessel," the heart, in which the oil is contained; the "lamp," the profession of enjoying the burning and shining light of the gospel of Christ; "going forth," the whole of their sojourning upon earth.

2. *Five of them were wise*—They took care to make a proper provision beforehand, and left nothing to be done in the last moment.

3. *Five were foolish*—These did not see that it was necessary to have oil in their vessels,—the salvation of God in their souls,—as well as a burning lamp of religious profession.

4. *Took oil in their vessels*—They not only had a sufficiency of oil in their lamps, but they carried a vessel with oil, to recruit their lamps, when it should be found expedient. This the foolish or improvident neglected to do; hence, when the oil that was in their lamps burned out, they had

none to pour into the lamp to maintain the flame.

5. *The bridegroom tarried*—The coming of the Bridegroom to an individual may imply his death; his coming to the world, the final judgment. The delay, the time from a man's birth to his death, in the first case; in the second, the time from the beginning to the end of the world.

6. *Slumbered and slept*—They became drowsy, and fell asleep. As sleep is frequently used in the sacred writings for death, so drowsiness, which precedes sleep, may be considered as pointing out the decays of the constitution, and the sicknesses which precede death. The other explanations which are given of this place, must be unsatisfactory to every man who is not warped by some point in his creed, which must be supported at every expense. Carelessness disposed them to drowsiness, drowsiness to sleep; deep sleep, which rendered them as unconscious of their danger as they were before inattentive to their duty.

7. *At midnight there was a cry*—The Jewish weddings were generally celebrated in the night, yet they usually began at the rising of the evening star; but in this case there was a more than ordinary delay.

8. *Behold, the bridegroom cometh*—What an awful thing to be summoned to appear before the Judge of quick and dead!

9. *Arose, and trimmed their lamps*—

There are certain preparations which most persons believe they must make at the approach of death; but, alas! it is often too late. The lamp is defiled, the light almost out, and the oil expended; and what adorning is a wretched sinner, struggling in the agonies of death, capable of preparing for his guilty soul?

10. *Our lamps are gone out*—So then it is evident that they were once lighted; they had once hearts illuminated and warmed by faith and love; but they had backslidden from the salvation of God, and now they are excluded from heaven, because, through their carelessness, they have let the light that was in them become darkness, and have not applied in time for a fresh supply of the salvation of God.

11. *Lest there be not enough for us and you*—These had all been companions in the Christian course, and there was a time when they might have been helpful to each other; but that time is now past for ever; none has a particle of grace to spare, not even to help the soul of the dearest relative. The grace which every man receives is just enough to save his own soul; he has no merits to bequeath to the church, no work of supererogation which can be placed to the account of another.

12. *While they went to buy, the bridegroom came*—What a dismal thing it is not to discover the emptiness of one's heart of all that is good, till it is too late to make any successful application for relief! God alone knows how many are thus deceived.

13. *And they that were ready*—They who were prepared, who had not only a burning lamp of an evangelical profession, but had oil in their vessel,—the faith that works by love in their hearts, and their

lives adorned with all the fruits of the Spirit.

14. *The door was shut*—Sinners on a death-bed too often meet with those deceitful merchants, who promise them salvation, for a price which is of no value in the sight of God. "Come unto me," says Jesus, "and buy." There is no salvation but through his blood, no hope for the sinner but that which is founded upon his sacrifice and death. "The door was shut." Dreadful and fatal words! No hope remains. Nothing but death can shut this door; but death may surprise us in our sins, and then despair is our only portion.

15. *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord*—Earnest prayer, when used in time, may do much good; but it appears from this parable, that there may come a time when prayer, even to Jesus, may be too late; namely, when the door is shut, when death has separated the body and the soul.

16. *I know you not*—As if he had said, "Ye are not of my company, ye were neither with the bride nor the bridegroom; ye slept while the others were in procession. I do not acknowledge you for my disciples; ye are not like him who is Love; ye refused to receive his grace; ye sinned it away when ye had it; now you are necessarily excluded from that kingdom where nothing but love and purity can dwell."

17. *Watch therefore*—If to "watch" be to employ ourselves chiefly about the business of our salvation, alas! how few of those who are called Christians are there who do watch! how many who slumber! how many who are asleep! how many seized with a lethargy! how many quite dead!

SECTION CLXXXIX.—THE TALENTS.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXV. 14—30.

FOR *the kingdom of heaven* is as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants,¹ and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability;² and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five

talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents. And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: Behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: Lo, *there* thou hast *that* is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1. *Called his own servants*—God never makes the children of men proprietors of his goods. They are formed by his power, and upheld by his bounty; and they hold their lives and their goods, as in many of our ancient tenures, at the will of their Lord.

2. *Unto one he gave five talents; to every man according to his several ability*—The duties men are called to perform are suited to their situations, and the talents they receive. The good that any man has he has received from God, as also the ability to improve that good. God's graces and temporal mercies are suited to the power which a man has of improving them. To

give eminent gifts to persons incapable of properly improving them, would be only to lead into a snare. The talent which each man has suits his own state best; and it is only pride and insanity which lead him to desire and envy the graces and talents of another. Five talents would be too much for some men: One talent would be too little. He who receives much, must make proportionate improvement; and from him who has received little, the improvement only of that little will be required. As five talents, in one case, are sufficient to answer the purpose for which they were given; so also are two, and one.

The man who improves the grace he has

received, however small, will as surely get to the kingdom of God, as he who has received most from his Master, and improved all.

In this parable of our Lord, four things may be considered:—

I. The Master who distributes the talents.

II. The servants who improved their talents.

III. The servant who buried his talent. And,

IV. His punishment.

I. THE MASTER WHO DISTRIBUTES THE TALENTS.

(1.) The Master's kindness. The servants had nothing, deserved nothing, had no claim on their Master; yet he, in his kindness, "delivers unto them his goods," not for his advantage, but for their comfort and salvation.

(2.) The Master distributes these goods diversely; giving "to one five, to another two, and to another one." No person can complain that he has been forgotten; the Master gives to each. None can complain of the diversity of the gifts; it is the Master who has done it. The Master has an absolute right over his own goods, and the servants cannot find fault with the distribution. He who has little should not envy him who has received much; for he has the greater labour, and the greater account to give. He who has much should not despise him who has little; for the Sovereign Master has made the distinction; and his little, suited to the ability which God has given him, and fitted to the place in which God's providence has fixed him, is sufficiently calculated to answer the purpose of the Master, in the salvation of the servant's soul.

(3.) The Master distributes his talents with wisdom. He gave to each "according to his several ability;" that is, to the power he had to improve what was given. It would not be just to make a servant responsible for what he is naturally incapable of managing; and it would not be proper to give more than could be improved. The powers which men have, God has given; and as he best knows the extent of these powers, so he suits his graces and blessings to them in the most wise and

effectual way. Though he may "make one vessel for honour," (that is, a more honourable place or office,) "and another for dishonour," (a less honourable office,) yet both are for the Master's use, both are appointed and capacitated to show forth his glory.

II. THE SERVANTS WHO IMPROVED THEIR TALENTS.

These persons are termed "slaves," such as were the property of the Master, who might dispose of them as he pleased. "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded."

(1.) The work was speedily begun; as soon as the Master gave the talents and departed, so soon they began to labour. There is not a moment to be lost; every moment has its grace, and every grace has its employment, and every thing is to be done for eternity.

(2.) The work was perseveringly carried on; "after a long time the lord of those servants cometh." The Master was long before he returned; but they did not relax. The longer time, the greater improvement. God gives every man just time enough to live, in this world, to glorify his Maker, and to get his soul saved. Many begin well, and continue faithful for a time, but how few persevere to the end! Are there none who seem to have outlived their glory, their character, their usefulness?

(3.) Their work was crowned with success. They doubled the sum which they had received. Every grace of God is capable of great improvement. Jesus himself, the pure, immaculate Jesus, "grew in wisdom and favour with God."

(4.) They were ready to give in a joyful account when their Master came and called for them. (i.) They come without delay; They expected his coming; and it was with an eye to this that they continued their labour. "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (ii.) They come without fear; the Master before whom they appear has always loved them, and given them the fullest proofs of his affection for them: His love to them has begotten in them love to him; and their obedience to his orders sprung from the love they bore to him. "He that loveth me," says Jesus, "will keep my words." (iii.) They render

up their accounts without confusion : He who received five brought five others ; and he who had received two brought two more : Nothing was to be done when their Master called ; all their business was fully prepared. (iv.) They gave up every thing to their Master, without attempting to appropriate any thing. Their ability was his, the talents his, and the continued power to improve them, his. All is of God, and all must be returned to him.

(5.) Their recompence from their gracious Master : (i.) They receive praise. "Well done, good and faithful servants." What a glorious thing to have the approbation of God, and the testimony of a good conscience ! They were good, pure, and upright within ; faithful, using to God's glory the blessings he had given. (ii.) They receive gracious promises. "Ye have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much." These promises refer not only to a future glory, but to an increase of God's grace and mercy here ; for the more faithfully a man improves what God has already given him, the more he shall have from his gracious Master : For he giveth more grace, till he fills the faithful soul with his own fulness. (iii.) They receive glory. "Enter into the joy of your Lord." As ye were partakers of my nature on earth, be ye sharers of my glory in heaven. The joy, the happiness, wherewith I am happy, shall be your eternal portion ! O, what is all we can do, all we can suffer, even the most lingering and cruel martyrdom, in comparison of this unbounded, eternal joy !

III. THE SERVANT WHO BURIED HIS TALENT.

"He that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money."

(1.) See the ingratitude of this servant. His Master gave him a talent, capable of being improved to his own present and eternal advantage ; but he slights the mercy of his Lord.

(2.) See his idleness. Rather than exert himself to improve what he has received, he goes and hides it.

(3.) See his gross error. He digs to hide it ; puts himself to more trouble to render the mercy of God to him of none

effect, than he would have had in combating and conquering the world, the devil, and the flesh.

(4.) See his injustice. He takes his Master's money, and neither improves nor designs to improve it, even while he is living on and consuming that bounty which would have been sufficient for a faithful servant. How much of this useless lumber is to be found in the church of Christ ! But suppose the man be a preacher, what a terrible account will he have to give to God ! consuming the provision made for a faithful pastor, and so burying, or misusing his talent as to do no good to immortal souls !

(5.) Hear the absurdity of his reasoning. "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard" (or avaricious) "man, reaping where thou hast not sown," &c. The wicked excuse of this faithless servant confuted itself, and condemned him. Nevertheless it is on this very model that sinners in general seek to justify themselves ; and the conclusion turns always against them. "I knew thee to be a hard man." How awfully deceived and deeply depraved must that person be, who not only attempts to excuse his follies, but to charge his crimes on God himself !

"I was afraid." Why ? Because thou wert an enemy to thy soul, and to thy God. "I was afraid." Of what ? That he would require more than he did give. How could this be ? Did he not give thee the talent freely, to show thee his benevolence ? And did he not suit it to thy ability, that he might show thee his wisdom, justice, and goodness, in not making thee responsible for more than thou couldst improve ?

IV. HIS PUNISHMENT.

(1.) He is reproached. "Thou wicked and slothful servant !" Wicked in thy heart : Slothful in thy work. "Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not." Thou art condemned by thy own mouth. Whose is the unemployed talent ? Did I not give thee this ? And did I require the improvement of two when I gave thee but one ? Thou knowest I did not.

(2.) He is stripped of what he possessed. "Take the talent from him." O terrible word ! Remove the candlestick from that

stolid, worldly-minded church: Take away the inspirations of the Holy Spirit from that lukewarm, Christless Christian, who only lives to resist them and render them of none effect. Dispose of that base, man-pleasing minister of his ministerial gifts; let his silver become brass, and his fine gold, dross. He loved the present world more than the eternal world, and the praise of men more than the approbation of God. "Take away the talent from him!"

(3.) He is punished with an everlasting separation from God and the glory of his power. "Cast forth the unprofitable servant." Let him have nothing but darkness, who refused to walk in the light: Let

him have nothing but misery, "weeping and gnashing of teeth," who has refused the happiness which God provided for him.

Reader, if the careless virgin, and the "unprofitable servant," against whom no flagrant iniquity is charged, be punished with an "outer darkness," with a hell of fire; of what sorer punishment must he be judged worthy, who is a murderer, an adulterer, a fornicator, a blasphemer, a thief, a liar, or in any respect an open violator of the laws of God? The "careless virgins," and "the unprofitable servants," were saints in comparison of millions, who are, notwithstanding, dreaming of an endless heaven, when fitted only for an endless hell!

SECTION CXC.—THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

A. D. 29.

MATTHEW XXV. 31—46.

WHEN the Son of Man shall come¹ in his glory, and all the holy angels² with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:³ And before him shall be gathered all nations: And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep⁴ on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,⁵ inherit⁶ the kingdom prepared for you⁷ from the foundation of the world:⁸ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat:⁹ I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger,¹⁰ and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me:¹¹ I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred,¹² and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren,¹³ ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed,¹⁴ into everlasting fire,¹⁵ prepared for the devil and his angels:¹⁶ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat:¹⁷ I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in:¹⁸ Naked, and ye clothed me not: Sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred,¹⁹ or

athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: ²⁰ But the righteous into life eternal.

1. *When the Son of Man shall come*—This must be understood of Christ's coming at the last day, to judge mankind; though all the preceding part of the chapter may be applied also to the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. *Holy angels*—It is supposed by some, that our Lord will have other angels (messengers) with him in that day, besides the holy ones. The evil angels may be in attendance to take, as their prey, those who shall be found on his left hand.

3. *The throne of his glory*—That glorious throne on which his glorified human nature is seated, at the right hand of the Father.

4. *He shall set the sheep, &c.*—The "right hand" signifies approbation and eminence: The "left hand," rejection and disapprobation. Of the good and faithful servants he approves, and therefore exalts them to his glory; of the slothful and wicked he disapproves, and casts them into hell. "Sheep," which have ever been considered as the emblems of mildness, simplicity, patience, and usefulness, represent here the genuine disciples of Christ. "Goats," which are naturally quarrelsome, lascivious, and excessively ill-scented, were considered as the symbols of riotous, profane, and impure men. They here represent all who have lived and died in their sins.

5. *Ye blessed of my Father*—This is the King's address to his followers; and contains the reason why they were found in the practice of all righteousness, and were now brought to this state of glory; they were blessed; came as children, and received the benediction of the Father, and became, and continued to be, members of the heavenly family.

6. *Inherit*—The inheritance is only for the children of the family: "If sons, then heirs," but not otherwise. The sons only shall enjoy the father's estate.

7. *Prepared for you*—That is, The kingdom of glory is designed for such as you;

you who have received the blessing of the Father, and were holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners.

8. *From the foundation of the world*—It was God's purpose and determination to admit none into his heaven but those who were made partakers of his holiness.

9. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat*—Every thing which is done to a follower of Christ, whether it be good or evil, he considers as done to himself. Of all the fruits of the Spirit, none are mentioned here but those that spring from love, or mercy; because these give men the nearest conformity to God. Jesus had said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and he here shows how this promise shall be fulfilled.

10. *I was a stranger*—Strangers are sometimes so destitute, as to be ready to perish for lack of food and raiment: A supply of these things keeps their souls and bodies together, which were about to be separated through lack of the necessaries of life. The word may also allude to a provision made for a poor family, which were scattered abroad, perhaps begging their bread, and who by the ministry of benevolent people are collected, relieved, and put in a way of getting their bread. O blessed work! to be the instruments of preserving human life, and bringing comfort and peace into the habitations of the wretched!

11. *I was sick, and ye visited me*—Relieving the strangers, and visiting the sick, were in high estimation among the Jews. One of their sayings on this head is worthy of notice: "He who neglects to visit the sick is like him who has shed blood." That is, as he has neglected, when it was in his power, to preserve life, he is as guilty in the sight of the Lord as he is who has committed murder.

12. *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, &c.*—Whatever is done for Christ's sake, is done through Christ's grace; and he who does the work attributes to Jesus

both the will and the power by which the work was done, and seeks and expects the kingdom of heaven, not as a reward, but as a gift of pure, unmerited mercy. Yet, while workers together with his grace, God attributes to them that which they do through his influence, as if they had done it independently of him. God has a right to form what estimate he pleases of the works wrought through himself: But man is never safe except when he attributes all to his Maker.

13. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren*—The meanest follower of Christ is acknowledged by him as his brother! What infinite condescension! Those, whom many would scorn to set with the dogs of their flock, are brothers and sisters of the blessed Jesus, and shall soon be set among the princes of his people.

14. *Depart from me, ye cursed*—Or, "Ye cursed! depart." These words are the address of the King to the sinners; and contain the reason why they are to be separated from blessedness: "Ye are cursed, because ye have sinned, and would not come unto me that ye might have life. No work of piety has proceeded from your hand, because the carnal mind, which is enmity against me, reigned in your heart; and ye would not have me to reign over you. Depart!" This includes what some have termed the punishment of loss or privation. Ye cannot, ye shall not, be united to me—"Depart!" O terrible word! and yet a worse is to come.

15. *Into everlasting fire*—This is the punishment of sense. Ye shall not only be separated from me, but ye shall be tormented, awfully, everlastingly tormented in that place of separation.

16. *Prepared for the devil and his angels*—The devil and his angels sinned before the creation of the world, and the place of torment was then prepared for them; it never was designed for human souls: But as the wicked are partakers with the devil and his angels in their iniquities, in their rebellion against God, so it is right that they should be sharers with them in their punishment. We see here, plainly, why sinners are destroyed,—not because there was no salvation for them, but because they neglected to re-

ceive good, and do good. As they received not the Christ who was offered to them, so they could not do the work of righteousness which was required of them. They are cursed, because they refused to be blessed; and they are damned, because they refused to be saved.

17. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat*—I put it in your power to do good, and ye would not. A variety of occasions offered themselves to you, but ye neglected them all; so that my blessings in your hands, not being improved, according to my order, became a curse to you.

18. *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in*—If men were sure that Jesus Christ was actually somewhere in the land, in great personal distress, hungry, thirsty, naked, and confined, they would doubtless run unto and relieve him. Now Christ assures us that a man who is hungry, thirsty, naked, &c., is his representative, and that whatever we do to such an one he will consider as done to himself; yet this testimony of Christ is not regarded! Well, he will be just when he judges, and righteous when he punishes.

19. *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, &c.*—It is want of faith which in general produces hard-heartedness to the poor. The man who only sees with eyes of flesh is never likely to discover Christ in the person of a man destitute of the necessaries of life. Some pretend not to know the distressed, because they have no desire to relieve them; but we find that this ignorance will not avail them at the bar of God.

20. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment*—No appeal, no remedy, to all eternity! No end to the punishment of those whose final impenitence manifests in them an eternal will and desire to sin. By dying in a settled opposition to God, they cast themselves into a necessity of continuing in an eternal aversion from him. But some are of opinion, that this punishment shall have an end: This is as likely as that the glory of the righteous shall have an end; for the same word is used to express the duration of the punishment, as is used to express the duration of the state of glory. I have seen the best things that have been written in favour of the final redemption of damned spirits; but I

never saw an answer to the argument against that doctrine, drawn from this verse, but what sound learning and criticism should be ashamed to acknowledge.

From what our Lord has here said, we may see that God indispensably requires of every man to bring forth good fruit; and that a fruitless tree shall be inevitably cut down, and cast into the fire. Let it be also remarked, that God does not here impute to his own children the good works which Jesus Christ did for them. No; Christ's feeding the multitudes in Judea will not be imputed to them, while persons in their own neighbourhood are perishing through want, and they have wherewithal to relieve them. He gives them a power that they may glorify his name by it, and have, in their own souls, the continued satisfaction which arises from succouring the distressed. Let it be further remarked, that Christ does not say here that they have purchased the eternal life by these good deeds. No; for the power to work, and the means of working, came both from God. They first had redemption through his blood, and then his Spirit worked in

them to will and to do. They were therefore only workers together with him, and could not be said, in any sense of the word, to purchase God's glory, with his own property. But though God works in them, and by them, he does not obey for them. The works of piety and mercy they perform, under the influence and by the aid of his grace. Thus God preserves the freedom of the human soul, and secures his own glory at the same time. Let it be remarked, further, that the punishment inflicted on the foolish virgins, the slothful servant, and the cursed who are separated from God, was not because of their personal crimes; but because they were not good, and were not useful in the world. Their lives do not appear to have been stained with crimes, but they were not adorned with virtues. They are sent to hell because they did no good. They were not renewed in the image of God; and hence did not bring forth fruit to his glory. If these harmless people are sent to perdition, what must the end be of the wicked and profligate?

SECTION CXCI.—JUDAS ENGAGES TO BETRAY CHRIST.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 1—5, 14—16; MARK XIV. 1, 2, 10, 11; LUKE XXI. 37, 38; XXII. 1—6.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the passover*,¹ and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.² Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted and sought how they might take Jesus by subtilty,³ and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar⁴ among the people; for they feared the people.⁵ Then entered satan into Judas⁶ surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way unto the chief priests and captains, and communed with them how he might betray him unto them: And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And *he* said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And he promised, and from

that time he sought opportunity⁷ how he might conveniently betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount of Olives*. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

1. *The passover*—A feast instituted in Egypt, to commemorate the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he slew the first-born of the Egyptians. The three most signal benefits vouchsafed to the Israelites were, (1.) The deliverance from the slavery of Egypt; to commemorate which, they kept the feast of unleavened bread, and the pass-over. (2.) The giving of the law; to commemorate which, they kept the feast of weeks. (3.) Their sojourning in the wilderness, and entrance into the promised land; to commemorate which, they kept the feast of tabernacles.

2. *The Son of Man is betrayed*, rather "delivered up," to be crucified—With what amazing calmness and precision does our blessed Lord speak of this awful event! What a proof does he here give of his prescience in so correctly predicting it; and of his love in so cheerfully undergoing it! Having instructed his disciples and the Jews by his discourses, edified them by his example, convinced them by his miracles, he now prepares to redeem them by his blood!

3. *And consulted and sought how they might take Jesus by subtilty*—The providence of God frustrated their artful machinations; and that event which they wished to conduct with the greatest privacy and silence was transacted with all possible celebrity, amidst the thousands who resorted to Jerusalem, at this season, for the keeping of the passover. It was, doubtless, of the very first importance that the crucifixion of Christ, which was preparatory to the most essential achievement of Christianity, namely, his resurrection from the grave, should be exhibited before many witnesses, and in the most open manner, that infidelity might not attempt, in future, to invalidate the evidences of the Christian religion, by alleging "that these things were done in a corner."

4. *Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar*—It was usual for the Jews to punish criminals at the public festivals; but in this case they were afraid of an insurrection, as our Lord had become very popular. The providence of God directed it thus, for the reason given in the preceding note.

He who observes a festival on motives purely human violates it in his heart, and is a hypocrite before God. It is likely they feared the Galileans, as being the countrymen of our Lord, more than they feared the people of Jerusalem.

5. *They feared the people*—The great mass of the people seem to have been convinced that Christ was at least a prophet sent from God; and it is likely they kept steady in their attachment to him. The multitude, who are represented as clamouring for his blood at the crucifixion, appear to have been a mere mob, formed out of the creatures of the chief priests and Pharisees.

6. *Then entered satan into Judas*—The devil filled the heart of Judas with avarice; and that infamous passion led him to commit the crime here specified. This at once accounts for the whole of this most unprincipled and unnatural transaction. None but a devil, or he who is possessed by one, could have been guilty of it: Let the living lay this to heart. A minister of the gospel who is a lover of money is constantly betraying the interests of Christ. He cannot serve two masters; and while his heart is possessed with the love of pelf, the love of God, and zeal for perishing souls, cannot dwell in him. What satan could not do by the envy and malice of the high priests and Pharisees, he effects by Judas, a false and fallen minister of the gospel of God. None are so dangerous to the interests of Christianity as persons of this stamp.

7. *He sought opportunity*—Men seldom leave a crime imperfect: When once sin is conceived, it meets, in general, with few

obstacles, till it brings forth death. How deceitful, how deeply damning, is the love of money! Judas is deservedly considered as one of the most infamous of men, his conduct base beyond description, and his motives vile. But how many, since his time, have walked in the same way! How many, for the sake of worldly wealth, have renounced the religion of their Lord and Master, and sold Jesus, and their interest

in heaven, for a short-lived portion of secular good! From John xii. 6, we learn that Judas, who was treasurer to our Lord and his disciples, (for he carried the bag,) was a thief, and frequently purloined a portion of what was given for the support of this holy family. Being disappointed of the prey he hoped to have from the sale of the precious ointment, he sold his Master to make up the sum. A thorough Jew!

SECTION CXCI.—CHRIST EATS A PASSOVER.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 17—20; MARK XIV. 12—17;
LUKE XXII. 7—18.

Now the first day of the *feast of* unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare¹ for thee that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, Peter and John, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and, behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water;² follow him into the house where he entereth in; and wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, My time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house; where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished *and* prepared: There make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: And *they* did as *he* had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.³ And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.⁴ And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

1. *Where wilt thou that we go and prepare*—How astonishing is this, that He who created all things, whether visible or invisible, and by whom all things were upheld, should so empty himself as not to be proprietor of a single house in his whole creation, to eat the last passover with his

disciples! This is certainly a mystery; and so, less or more, is every thing that God does. But how inveterate and destructive must the nature of sin be, when such emptying and humiliation were necessary to its destruction!

2. *Bearing a pitcher of water*—How

correct is the foreknowledge of Jesus Christ! Even the minutest circumstances are comprehended by it! An honest employment, howsoever mean, is worthy the attention of God; and even a man bearing a pitcher of water is marked in all his steps, and is an object of the merciful regards of the Most High. This man was employed in carrying home the water which was to be used for baking the unleavened bread on the following day; for on that day it was not lawful to carry any: Hence they were obliged to fetch it on the preceding evening.

3. *They made ready the passover*—That is, they provided the lamb, &c., which were appointed by the law for this solemnity.

“Every promise of pardon made under the older economy of the divine government, had respect to His work who was appointed to be the Mediator between God and man. The merit of that work formed the basis of every revelation of grace from the beginning of the world; the knowledge of it, as possessing this mighty efficacy and value, was conveyed to mortals by the intimations of prophecy, and the appointment of ceremonial and sacrificial rites; and many a bosom rejoiced in discerning, through the shadows of early ages, the

grand achievement of reconciliation, to be performed in the fulness of time, and to unite the whole duration of earth under one dispensation of love.”—J. PARSONS.

4. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him*—It is a common opinion, that our Lord ate the passover some hours before the Jews ate it; for the Jews, according to custom, ate theirs at the end of the fourteenth day, but Christ ate his the preceding even, which was the beginning of the same sixth day, or Friday; the Jews begin their day at sunset, we at midnight. Thus Christ ate the passover on the same day with the Jews, but not on the same hour. Christ kept this passover the beginning of the fourteenth day, the precise day and hour in which the Jews had eaten their first passover in Egypt. And in the same part of the same day in which the Jews had sacrificed their first paschal lamb, namely, between the two evenings, about the ninth hour, or three o'clock, Jesus Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us: For it was at this hour that he yielded up his last breath; and then it was that, the sacrifice being completed, Jesus said, “It is finished.”

SECTION CXCIH.—THE DISCIPLES AGAIN REPROVED FOR AMBITION.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XIII. 1—17.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given¹ all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: And Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?² Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now;³ but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my

feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.⁴ Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only,⁵ but also *my* hands and *my* head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed⁶ needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: And ye are clean, but not all.⁷ For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: And ye say well; for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.⁸ For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord;⁹ neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.¹⁰

1. *Knowing that the Father had given, &c.*—Our Lord seeing himself almost at the end of his race, and being about to leave his apostles, thought it necessary to leave them a lesson of humility exemplified by himself, to deliver them from the bad influence of those false ideas which they formed concerning the nature of his kingdom. On all occasions previously to this, the disciples had shown too much attachment to worldly honours and dignities; if this ambition had not been removed, the consequences of it would have been dreadful in the establishment of the religion of Christ; as, after his death, it would have divided and infallibly dispersed them. It was necessary, therefore, to restrain this dangerous passion, and to confirm, by a remarkable example, what he had so often told them,—that true greatness consisted in the depth of humility; and that those who were the willing servants of all, should be the highest in the account of God.

2. *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*—Every word here is exceedingly emphatic. Peter had often seen the great humility of his Lord, but never saw his condescension so particularly marked as in this instance.

3. *What I do thou knowest not now, &c.*—“One ray of that light which flames effulgent in the ‘blest regions of joy and peace,’ will dispel a thousand doubts which hang over us in this obscure and perplexed state. Methinks I hear the child of sorrow exclaiming, in anguish of soul, ‘Why

this calamity? Why this disease? Why this bereavement?’ Suffice it to reply, that a *wherefore* there undoubtedly is, and that, at the proper time, it shall fully, happily be made known. Once arrived at our final rest, all will be clear, all will be good. As we stand on the hill of our heavenly Zion, and look back on all that road of life by which we have been brought,—sometimes over the mountain's summit, sometimes through the dark and dreadful pass; sometimes along a straight, and smooth, and flowery path, and then again on a way perplexed, thorny, and rugged; sometimes with a clear sky, and fanned by the vernal breeze, and at other times through the inclement blast, and ‘rude peltings of the pitiless storm;’ sometimes in the most beloved society, and in converse which is the banquet of the soul, and anon in dejected and dreary solitude;—as we stand on the hill of our heavenly Zion, and look back on all this way we have been brought; in a transport of adoration and gratitude we shall exclaim,

“Our Jesus hath done all things well.”

—BROMLEY.

4. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*—Thou canst not be my disciple unless I wash thee. It is certain Christ did not mean to exclude him from the apostolic office, if he should persist, through the deepest reverence for his Master, to refuse to let him wash his feet. This act of his was emblematical of something spiritual, of

something that concerned the salvation of Peter; and without which washing, he could neither be an apostle, nor be finally saved; therefore our Lord said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." There is a mystical washing by the blood of Christ, 1 John i. 7; and by his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 11; Titus iii. 5, 6. It was the common custom of our Lord to pass from sensible and temporal things to those which were spiritual and eternal, and to take occasion, from every thing that presented itself, to instruct his disciples, and to raise their souls to God. If the discourse was of bread, water, leaven, father, mother, riches, &c., he immediately changed the literal sense, and, under the figure of these things, spoke of matters altogether spiritual and divine. I have met with many good persons who have attempted to imitate our blessed Lord in this; but I never knew one to succeed in it. The reason is, it requires not only very deep piety, but sound sense, together with an accurate knowledge of the nature and properties of the subjects which, in this way, the person wishes to illustrate; and very few can be found who have such deep philosophical knowledge as such cases require.

5. *Lord, not my feet only, &c.*—It appears that Peter entered into our Lord's meaning, and saw that this was emblematical of a spiritual cleansing; therefore he wishes to be completely washed.

6. *He that is washed*—If these last

words of our Lord had any spiritual reference, it is not easy to say what it was. A common opinion is the following: "He who is washed," who is justified through the blood of the Lamb, "needeth only to wash his feet," to regulate all his affections and desires, and to get, by faith, his conscience cleansed from any fresh guilt which he may have contracted since his justification.

7. *Ye are clean, but not all*—Eleven of you are upright and sincere; the twelfth is a traitor. So it appears he had washed the feet of all the twelve; but as no external ablutions can purify a hypocrite or a traitor, therefore Judas still remained unclean.

8. *Ye also ought to wash one another's feet*—That is, Ye should be ready, after my example, to condescend to all the weakness of your brethren; to be willing to do the meanest offices for them, and to prefer the least of them in honour to yourselves.

9. *The servant is not greater than his lord*—Christ has ennobled the acts of humility, by practising them himself. The true glory of a Christian consists in being, in his measure, as humble as his Lord.

10. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*—True happiness consists in the knowledge of God, and in obedience to him. A man is not happy because he knows much; but because he receives much of the divine nature, and is, in all his conduct, conformed to the divine will.

SECTION CXCIV.—CHRIST ASSERTS THAT JUDAS IS THE TRAITOR.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 21—26; MARK XIV. 18—22;
LUKE XXII. 3, 19—23; JOHN XIII. 18—30.

AND as they were eating, Jesus took bread,¹ and blessed it,² and brake it,³ and gave it to the disciples,⁴ and said, Take, eat; this is my body⁵ which is given for you: This do in remembrance of me. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined: But woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass,

ye may believe⁶ that I am *he*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and as they sat and did eat, *he* testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me.⁷ Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake;⁸ and they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing; and they were exceeding sorrowful,⁹ and began every one of them to say unto him one by one, Lord is it I? And another *said*, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, that dippeth *his* hand¹⁰ with me in the dish; the same shall betray me. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: But woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! good were it for that man¹¹ if he had never been born. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped *it*. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop satan entered into Judas¹² surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.¹³ Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some *of them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.¹⁴ Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I?¹⁵ He said unto him, Thou hast said. He then having received the sop went immediately out: And it was night.¹⁶

1. *Jesus took bread*—This is the first institution of what is termed "the Lord's supper." To every part of this ceremony, as here mentioned, the utmost attention should be paid. "Jesus took bread:" Of what kind? Unleavened bread, certainly, because there was no other kind to be had in all Judea at this time; for this was the first day of unleavened bread, when the Jews, according to the command of God, were to purge away all leaven from their houses; for he who sacrificed the passover, having leaven in his dwelling, was considered to be such a transgressor of the divine

law as could no longer be tolerated among the people of God; and therefore was to be cut off from the congregation of Israel.

Now, if any respect should be paid to the primitive institution, in the celebration of this divine ordinance, then, unleavened, unyeasted bread should be used. In every sign, or type, the thing signifying or pointing out that which is beyond itself should either have certain properties, or be accompanied with certain circumstances, as expressive as possible of the thing signified. Bread, simply considered in itself, may be an emblem apt enough of the body of our

Lord Jesus, which was given for us; but the design of God was evidently, that it should not only point out this, but also the disposition required in those who should celebrate both the antetype and the type; and this the apostle explains to be sincerity and truth, the reverse of malice and wickedness. The very taste of the bread was instructive: It pointed out, to every communicant, that he who came to the table of God with malice or ill-will against any soul of man, or with wickedness, a profligate or sinful life, might expect to eat and drink judgment to himself, as not discerning that the Lord's body was sacrificed for this very purpose, "that all sin might be destroyed;" and that sincerity, such purity as the clearest light can discern no stain in, might be diffused through the whole soul; and that truth, the law of righteousness and true holiness, might regulate and guide all the actions of life. Had the bread used on these occasions been of the common kind, it would have been perfectly unfit, or improper, to have communicated these uncommon significations; and, as it was seldom used, its rare occurrence would make the emblematical representation more deeply impressive; and the sign, and the thing signified, have their due correspondence and influence.

2. *And blessed it*—No blessing of the elements is here intended; they were already blessed, in being sent as a gift of mercy from the bountiful Lord; but God, the Sender, is blessed, because of the liberal provision he has made for his worthless creatures. Blessing and touching the bread are merely popish ceremonies, unauthorized either by scripture, or the practice of the pure church of God; necessary, of course, to those who pretend to transmute, by a kind of spiritual incantation, the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ; a measure the grossest in folly, and most stupid in nonsense, to which God in judgment ever abandoned the fallen spirit of man.

3. *And brake it*—We often read in the scriptures of breaking bread, but never of cutting it. The Jewish people had nothing similar to our high-raised loaf: Their bread was made broad and thin, and was consequently very brittle, and, to divide it, there was no need of a knife.

The breaking of the bread I consider essential to the proper performance of this solemn and significant ceremony; because this act was designed by our Lord to shadow forth the wounding, piercing, and breaking of his body upon the cross; and, as all this was essentially necessary to the making a full atonement for the sin of the world, so it is of vast importance that this apparently little circumstance, the breaking of the bread, should be carefully attended to, that the godly communicant may have every necessary assistance to enable him to discern the Lord's body, while engaged in this most important and divine of all God's ordinances. But who does not see that one small cube of fermented, that is, leavened, bread, previously divided from the mass with a knife, and separated by the fingers of the minister, can never answer the end of the institution, either as to the matter of the bread, or the mode of dividing it? Man is naturally a dull and heedless creature, especially in spiritual things, and has need of the utmost assistance of his senses, in union with those expressive rites and ceremonies which the holy scripture, not tradition, has sanctioned, in order to enable him to arrive at spiritual things, through the medium of earthly similitudes.

4. *And gave it to the disciples*—Not only the breaking, but also the distribution, of the bread are necessary parts of this rite. In the Romish church, the bread is not broken nor delivered to the people, that they may take and eat; but the consecrated wafer is put upon their tongue by the priest; and it is generally understood by the communicants, that they should not masticate, but swallow it whole.

5. *This is my body*—Here it must be observed, that Christ had nothing in his hands, at this time, but part of that unleavened bread which he and his disciples had been eating at supper; and therefore he could mean no more than this, namely, that the bread which he was now breaking represented his body, which, in the course of a few hours, was to be crucified for them. Common sense, unsophisticated with superstition and erroneous creeds, and reason, unawed by the secular sword of sovereign authority, could not possibly take any other meaning than this plain, consistent, and rational one, out of these words.

Let it be observed, if any thing further is necessary on this point, that the paschal lamb is called the "passover," because it represented the destroying angel's passing over the children of Israel, while he slew the first-born of the Egyptians; and our Lord and his disciples call this lamb the "passover," several times in this chapter; by which it is demonstrably evident, that they could mean no more than that the lamb sacrificed on this occasion was a memorial of, and represented, the means used for the preservation of the Israelites from the blast of the destroying angel.

6. *That ye may believe*—These frequent predictions of his death, so circumstantial in themselves, had the most direct tendency to confirm the disciples, not only in the belief of his being the Messiah, but also in that of his omniscience.

7. *One of you shall betray me*—Or, "will deliver me up." Judas had already betrayed him; and he was now about to deliver him into the hands of the chief priests, according to the agreement he had made with them.

8. *Looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake*—Every one but Judas, conscious of his own innocence, looked about upon all the rest, wondering who in that company could be such a traitor! Even Judas himself is not suspected. Is not this a proof, that his general conduct had been such as to subject him to no suspicion?

9. *They were exceeding sorrowful*—That is, the eleven who were innocent; and the hypocritical traitor, Judas, endeavoured to put on the appearance of sorrow. Strange! Did he not know that Christ knew the secrets of his soul? Or, had his love of money so far blinded him, as to render him incapable of discerning even this, with which he had been before so well acquainted?

10. *It is one that dipped his hand*—As the Jews ate the passover a whole family together, it was not convenient for them all to dip their bread in the same dish; they therefore had several little dishes or plates, in which was the juice of the bitter herbs, on different parts of the table; and those who were nigh one of these, dipped their bread in it. As Judas is represented as dipping in the same dish with Christ, it

shows that he was either near or opposite to him. If this man's heart had not been hardened, and his conscience seared beyond all precedent, by the deceitfulness of sin, would he have showed his face in this sacred assembly, or have thus put the seal to his own perdition, by eating of this sacrificial lamb? Is it possible that he could feel no compunction? Alas! having delivered himself up into the hands of the devil, he was capable of delivering up his Master into the hands of the chief priests; and thus, when men are completely hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, they can outwardly perform the most solemn acts of devotion, without feeling any sort of inward concern about the matter.

11. *Good were it for that man*—Can this be said of any sinner, in the common sense in which it is understood, if there be any redemption from hell's torments? If a sinner should suffer millions of millions of years in them, and get out at last to the enjoyment of heaven, then it was well for him that he had been born; or still he has an eternity of blessedness before him. Can the doctrine of the non-eternity of hell's torments stand in the presence of this saying? Or can the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked consist with this declaration,—“It would have been well for that man if he had never been born?” Then he must be in some state of conscious existence, as non-existence is said to be better than that state in which he is now found. It was common for the Jews to say of any flagrant transgressor, “It would have been better for him had he never been born.”

12. *Satan entered into Judas*—He had entered into him before, and now he enters again, to strengthen him in his purpose of delivering up his Master. But the moral was not the cause of this entering in; the giving of it only marks the time in which the devil confirmed Judas in his traitorous purpose.

13. *That thou doest, do quickly*—As if he had said, “Thou art past all counsel; thou hast filled up the measure of thy iniquity, and hast wholly abandoned thyself to satan; I will not force thee to turn from thy purpose, and without this thou wilt not. Thy designs are all known to me; what thou art determining to do, and I to permit, do directly; delay not, I am ready.”

14. *Give something to the poor*—It is well known that our Lord and his disciples lived on public charity; and yet they gave alms out of what they had thus received. From this we learn, that even those who live on charity themselves are expected to divide a little with those who are in deeper distress and want.

15. *Judas said, Master, is it I?*—What excessive impudence! He knew, in his conscience, that he had already betrayed his Master, and was waiting now for the

servants of the chief priests, that he might deliver him into their hands; and yet he says, hoping that he had transacted his business so privately that it had not yet transpired, "Master, is it I?"

16. *He then having received the sop went immediately out: And it was night*—He set off to Jerusalem from Bethany, which was about two miles distant; and, under the conduct of the prince of darkness, and in the time of darkness, he did this work of darkness.

SECTION CXCV.—A NEW COMMANDMENT.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XIII. 31—38.

THEREFORE, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified,¹ and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children,² yet a little while³ I am with you. Ye shall seek me:⁴ And as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come;⁵ so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you,⁶ That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know⁷ that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now;⁸ but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?⁹ I will lay down my life for thy sake.¹⁰ Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

1. *Now is the Son of Man glorified*—Now it fully appears, that I am the person appointed to redeem a lost world by my blood. I have already been glorified by this appointment, and am about to be farther glorified by my death, resurrection, and ascension.

2. *Little children*—Or, rather, "Beloved children." It is an expression which implies great tenderness and affection, and such as a fond mother uses to her most beloved babes. Now that Judas was gone out, he could use this epithet without any restriction of meaning.

3. *Yet a little while*—The end of my life is at hand; Judas is gone to consummate his treason; I have but a few hours

to be with you, and you shall be, by and by, scattered.

4. *Ye shall seek me*—For a few days ye shall feel great distress because of my absence.

5. *Whither I go, ye cannot come*—Your time is not up. The Jews shall die in their sins, martyrs to their infidelity; but ye shall die in the truth, martyrs for your Lord.

6. *A new commandment I give unto you*—In what sense are we to understand that this was a new commandment? "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," was a positive precept of the law, Lev. xix. 18; and it is the very same that Christ repeats here; how then was it new? Our Lord

answers this question, "Even as I have loved you." Now Christ more than fulfilled the Mosaic precept; he not only loved his neighbour as himself, but he loved him more than himself, for he laid down his life for men. In this he calls upon the disciples to imitate him; to be ready on all occasions to lay down their lives for each other. This was, strictly, a new commandment; no system of morality ever prescribed any thing so pure and disinterested as this. Our blessed Lord has outdone all the moral systems in the universe in two words: (1.) Love your enemies; (2.) Lay down your lives for each other.

7. *By this shall all men know, &c.*—From this time forward, this mutual and disinterested love shall become the essential and distinctive mark of all my disciples. When they love one another with pure hearts, fervently, even unto death, then shall it fully appear that they are disciples of that person who laid down his life for his sheep, and who became, by dying, a ransom for all.

"If the Christian doctrine be considered with respect to its influence on the heart and feelings, it is evident, that all other systems of religion must sink before it. The faith of a true believer must be infinitely more strong than that of others; because it reposes on a God, who has given so wondrous demonstration of his love. The hope of a true Christian must be infinitely more exalted, because it hath respect to blessings, which were purchased with a countless price. And as to love! love, the element of heaven, the theme of angels, the delight of Deity! O! who can love with the fervour of a Christian? I repeat it; who can love with the fervour of a Christian?"—H. S. BOYD.

8. *Thou canst not follow me now*—Thou hast not faith strong enough to die for me, nor is thy work yet done; but hereafter thou shalt suffer for my sake, and die in defence of my truth.

9. *Why cannot I follow thee now?*—Peter probably thought that our Lord intended to go some long journey, which would necessarily subject him to many inconveniences and fatigue; and he felt quite disposed to follow him in this supposed journey, at all hazards. He saw no reason, because he did not see our Lord's meaning, why he could not follow him now.

10. *I will lay down my life for thy sake*—Poor Peter! thou wast sincere, but thou didst not know thy own strength. Thou wast at this time willing to die; but, when the time came, wast not able. Christ must first die for Peter, before Peter can die for him. Let no man think he can do any thing good, without the immediate assistance of God. Peter's denial should be an eternal warning to all self-confident persons: Though there be sincerity and goodwill at the bottom, yet in the trial these cannot perform that office which belongs to the power of God. We should will, and then look to God for power to execute; without him we can do nothing.

"Peter always appears, in the sacred story, like himself. The individuality of his character is supported with wonderful propriety and consistency. We always find him, eager, forward, impetuous, always zealous, but his zeal not always according to knowledge; equally rash and affectionate; speaking first and thinking afterward; bold in profession, but failing in execution—yet open to conviction, and deriving profit from his very failings."—JAY.

SECTION CXCVI.—THE DISCIPLES CONTEND WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XXII. 24—38.

AND there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be

so : But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? *is* not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon,¹ behold, satan hath desired *to have* you,² that he may sift *you* as wheat : But I have prayed for thee,³ that thy faith fail not : And when thou art converted,⁴ strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing ? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip : And he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors : For the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

1. *Simon, Simon*—When a name is thus repeated in the sacred writings, it appears to be always intended as an expression of love, manifested by a warning voice ; as if he had said, “ While thou and the others are contending for supremacy, satan is endeavouring to destroy you all ; but I have prayed for thee, as being in most danger.”

2. *Satan hath desired to have you*—Satan had already got one, Judas ; he had nearly got another, Peter ; and he wished to have all. But we see by this, that the devil cannot even tempt a man unless he receive permission. He desires to do all evil ; he is permitted only to do some.

3. *I have prayed for thee*—From the natural forwardness and impetuosity of thy own spirit, thou wilt be brought into the most imminent danger ; but I have supplicated for thee, that thy faith may not utterly fail. Peter's faith did fail, but not utterly ; he did fall, but he did not fall off, apostatize, or forsake his Master and his cause finally, as Judas did.

4. *When thou art converted*—Restored to a sense of thy folly and sin, and to me and my cause ; establish these thy brethren. All the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, merely through fear of losing their lives. Peter, who continued for a while near him, denied his Master with oaths, and repeated this thrice. Our Lord seems to intimate, that, after this fall, Peter would become more cautious and circumspect than ever ; and that he should become uncommonly strong in the faith ; which was the case ; and that, notwithstanding the baseness of his past conduct, he should be a proper instrument for strengthening the feeble-minded, and supporting the weak. His two epistles to the persecuted Christians show how well he was qualified for this important work.

(1.) On Peter's denial of our Lord, much has been written. By one class he has been incautiously excused, and by another rashly censured. Peter was self-confident, but he was certainly sincere ; and, had he

trusted more in God, and less in himself, he would not have miscarried: He did not look to his Maker for strength, and therefore he fell; he was surprised, and found unarmed. It is a well-known fact, that circumstances have occurred in which persons of the most bold, intrepid, and adventurous minds have proved mere cowards, and acted to their own disgrace and ruin. Facts of this kind occur in the naval and military history of this and every other country. No man is master of himself at all times; therefore prudence and caution should ever be united to courage. Peter had courage, but he had not caution: He felt a powerful and determined will; but the trial was above his own strength, and he did not look to God for power from on high. He was warned by this miscarriage, but he dearly bought his experience. Let him that readeth understand.

(2.) A fact which occurs in the English Martyrology will serve to illustrate the history of Peter's denial and fall: In the reign of Queen Mary, when the Papists of this kingdom burned all the Protestants they could convict of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, a poor man who had received the truth in theory, but had not as yet felt its power, was convicted, and sentenced, by their bloody tribunal, to be burned alive. While they were drawing him to the place of execution, he was very pensive and melancholy; and when he came within sight of the stake, &c., he was overpowered with fear and terror, and exclaimed, "O I can't burn! I can't burn!" Some of the attending priests, supposing that he wished to recant, spoke to him to that effect. The poor man still believed the truth, felt no disposition to deny it; but did not feel such

an evidence of his Maker's approbation in his own soul as could enable him to burn for it. He continued in great agony, feeling all the bitterness of death, and calling on God to reveal himself through the Son of his love. While thus engaged, God broke in upon his soul, and he was filled with peace and joy in believing. He then clapped his hands, and exclaimed with a powerful voice, "I can burn! I can burn!" He was bound to the stake, and burned gloriously, triumphing in God through whom he had received the atonement. This was a case in point. The man was convinced of the truth, and was willing to burn for the truth; but had not, as yet, power, because he had not yet received an evidence of his acceptance with God. He pleaded for this with strong crying and tears, and God answered him to the joy of his soul; and then he was as able as he was willing to go to prison and to death. Without the power and consolation of the Spirit of God, who could be a martyr, even for divine truth? We see now plainly how the case lies: No man is expected to do a supernatural work by his own strength; if left to that in a case of this kind, his failure must be inevitable. But, in all spiritual matters, assistance is to be sought from God; he that seeks shall find, and he that finds divine strength, shall be equal to the task he is called to fulfil. Peter was incautious, and off his guard: The trial came; he looked not for power from on high, and he fell; not merely because he was weak, not because God withheld the necessary assistance; but because he did not depend on and seek it. In no part of this business can Peter be excused, he is every where blamable; and yet, through the whole, an object of pity.

SECTION CXCVII.—CHRIST APPOINTS WINE IN THE EUCHARIST.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 27—29; MARK XIV. 23—25;
LUKE XXII. 20; 1 COR. XI. 25.

LIKEWISE also after supper he took the cup, and gave thanks,¹ and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; and they all drank of it. This is my blood of the new testament,² which is shed for

you³ and for many, for the remission of sins.⁴ This do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.⁵ Verily I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine,⁶ until that day when I drink it new with you⁷ in my Father's kingdom.

1. *He took the cup, and gave thanks, &c.*

—With respect to the bread, he had before simply said, "Take, eat, this is my body;" but concerning the cup, he says, "Drink ye all of it;" for as this pointed out the very essence of the institution, namely, the "blood of atonement," it was necessary that each should have a particular application of it; therefore he says, "Drink ye all of it." By this we are taught, that the cup is essential to the sacrament of the Lord's supper; so that they who deny the cup to the people sin against God's institution; and they who receive not the cup are not partakers of the body and blood of Christ. If either could, without mortal prejudice, be omitted, it might be the bread; but the cup, as pointing out the blood poured out, that is, the life, by which alone the great sacrificial act is performed, and remission of sins procured, is absolutely indispensable. On this ground, it is demonstrable, that there is not a priest under heaven, who denies the cup to the people, that can be said to celebrate the Lord's supper at all; nor is there one of their votaries that ever received the holy sacrament. All pretension to this is an absolute farce, so long as the cup, the emblem of the atoning blood, is denied. How strange is it, that the very men who plead so much for the bare literal meaning of "This is my body," in the preceding verse, should deny all meaning to "Drink ye all of this cup," in this verse! And though Christ has in the most positive manner enjoined it, they will not permit one of the laity to taste it! O what a thing is man! a constant contradiction to reason and to himself!

"For this is that blood of mine" which was pointed out by all the sacrifices under the Jewish law, and particularly by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb; that blood of the sacrifice slain for the ratification of the new covenant; the blood ready to be poured out for the multitudes,—the whole Gentile world as well as the Jews,—for the taking away of sins; sin, whether original or actual, in all

its power and guilt, in all its internal energy and pollution.

2. *This is my blood of the new testament*—In this place our Lord terms his blood "the blood of the new covenant;" by which he means that grand plan of agreement, or reconciliation, which God was now establishing between himself and mankind, by the passion and death of his Son, through whom alone men could draw nigh to God.

3. *Which is shed, "poured out," for you*—Our Lord, by this very remarkable mode of expression, teaches us that, as his body was to be broken or crucified in our stead, so here the blood was to be poured out to make an atonement, as the words, "remission of sins," sufficiently prove; for "without shedding of blood there is no remission," nor any remission by shedding of blood but in a sacrificial way.

4. *For the remission of sins*—"For, or in reference to, the taking away of sins." For, although the blood is shed, and the atonement made, no man's sins are taken away until, as a true penitent, he returns to God, and, feeling his utter incapacity to save himself, believes in Christ Jesus, who is the Justifier of the ungodly.

The phrase, "remission of sins," does not mean merely the pardon of sins, as it is generally understood, but the removal or taking away of sins; not only the guilt, but also the very nature, of sin, and the pollution of the soul through it; and comprehends all that is generally understood by the terms "justification" and "sanctification."

5. *This do ye, in remembrance of me*—Both St. Luke and St. Paul add, that, after giving the bread, our Lord said, "Do this in remembrance of me." And after giving the cup, St. Paul alone adds, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." The account, as given by St. Paul, should be carefully followed, being fuller, and received, according to his own declaration, by especial revelation from God.

6. *I will not drink henceforth of this*

fruit of the vine—These words seem to intimate no more than this: We shall not have another opportunity of eating this bread and drinking this wine together; as, in a few hours, my crucifixion shall take place.

7. *Until that day when I drink it new with you*—That is, I shall no more drink of the produce of the vine with you; but shall drink new wine; wine of a widely different nature from this; a wine which the kingdom of God alone can afford. The term “new,” in scripture, is often taken in this sense. So, the “new heaven,” the “new earth,” the “new covenant,” the “new man,” mean a heaven, earth, covenant, man, of a very different nature from the former. It was our Lord’s invariable custom to illustrate heavenly things by

those of earth, and to make that which had last been the subject of conversation the means of doing it. Thus he uses “wine” here, of which they had lately drunk, and on which he had held the preceding discourse, to point out the supreme blessedness of the kingdom of God. But, however pleasing and useful wine may be to the body, and how helpful soever, as an ordinance of God, it may be to the soul in the holy sacrament; yet, the wine of the kingdom, the spiritual enjoyments at the right hand of God, will be infinitely more precious and useful. From what our Lord says here, we learn, that the sacrament of his supper is a type and a pledge, to genuine Christians, of the felicity they shall enjoy with Christ in the kingdom of glory.

SECTION CXCVIII.—CHRIST CONSOLES THE DISCIPLES.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XIV. 1—14.

LET not your heart be troubled: ¹ Ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house ³ are many mansions: ⁴ If *it were* not so, I would have told you. ⁵ I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ⁶ and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, ⁷ the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father, ⁸ but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: And from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, ⁹ and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; ¹⁰ and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? ¹¹ the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: But the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. ¹² Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: Or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works*

than these¹³ shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

1. *Let not your heart be troubled*—After having answered St. Peter's question, he addresses himself again to his disciples, and tells them not to be afflicted at his leaving them, nor to lose courage because of what he said concerning Peter's denying him; that if they reposed their confidence in God, he would protect them; and that, howsoever they might see him treated, they should believe in him more firmly, as his sufferings, death, and resurrection should be to them the most positive proof of his being the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

2. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*—It is best to read both the verbs in the imperative mood: "Place your confidence in God, and in me as the Mediator between God and man, and expect the utmost support from God; but expect it all through me." The disciples began to lose all hope of a secular kingdom, and were discouraged in consequence. Christ promises them a spiritual and heavenly inheritance, and thus lifts up their drooping hearts.

3. *In my Father's house*—The kingdom of glory.

4. *Many mansions*—Though I have said before, that whither I am going ye cannot come now, yet do not think that we shall be for ever separated. I am going to that state of glory where there is not only a place of supreme eminence for myself, but also places for all my disciples; various degrees of glory, suited to the various capacities and attainments of my followers.

5. *If it were not so, I would have told you*—If your places were not prepared in the kingdom of God, I would not have permitted you to have indulged a vain hope concerning future blessedness.

6. *And if I go*—And when I shall have gone and prepared a place for you, opened the kingdom of an eternal glory for your reception, and for the reception of all that shall die in the faith, "I will come again," after my resurrection, and give you the fullest assurances of this state of blessed-

ness; and confirm you in the faith, by my grace and the effusion of my Spirit.

"It is the presence of Christ in heaven that will make it so rich a heaven to you. Some most exhilarating and delightful foretastes of it you have enjoyed in favoured seasons on earth; and if such are the streams, what must be the fountain! If such the glimpses, what the full unclouded gaze! Times of refreshing now are from the presence of the Lord; what then will be the high felicities of partaking of his heavenly presence! If communion with him here in appointed means is so enriching, that the seasons in which we are most favoured with it constitute the bright spots of our toilsome journey, what must it be to sit at his feet in glory; to gaze upon that face that shineth like the sun in his strength; and to hold intimate and unbroken fellowship with Him whose smile irradiates the whole paradise of God!"—J. E. BEAUMONT.

7. *I am the way, &c.*—That leads to the Father; the truth that teaches the knowledge of God, and directs in the way; the life that animates all those who seek and serve him, and which is to be enjoyed eternally at the end of the way. Christ is the way: (1.) By his doctrine. (2.) By his example. (3.) By his sacrifice. (4.) By his Spirit. He is the truth: (1.) In opposition to all false religions. (2.) To the Mosaic law, which was only the shadow, not the truth or substance, of the good things which were to come. And, (3.) In respect to all the promises of God. He is the life both in grace and glory; the life that not only saves from death, but destroys it.

8. *No man cometh unto the Father*—By any other doctrine, by any other merit, or by any other intercession, than mine.

"(1.) Jesus is the way to pardon, to peace, to holiness, to heaven. (2.) Jesus is the Fountain of truth, the Revealer of truth, the Patron of truth—the truth of all those promises, prophecies, and types of the Messiah recorded in the Old Testa-

ment. (3.) Our blessed Lord has life in himself. He is the spiritual life of believers: He is the life of the body: He gives eternal life. (4.) Men have no intercourse with the Father in this world, but by Jesus Christ. No man, when he departs this life, can go to the Father in the heavenly world, but by Jesus Christ. Jesus, as our Mediator, stands between us and the Father. This proves, that the mediatorial plan is the only way of salvation to a sinful world."—EDMONDSON.

9. *Shew us the Father*—As if he had said, "We have seen and adored thee; and our happiness will be complete if thou show us the Father." The demand of Philip was similar to that made by Moses, Exodus xxxiii. 18. He wished to see the glory of God. In Peter, James, or John, this would have been inexcusable; but Philip had not seen the transfiguration on the mount. The Jewish history is full of the manifestations which God made of himself, and especially when he gave the law. As Christ was introducing a new law, Philip wished to have an additional manifestation of God.

10. *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*—Could any creature say these words? Do they not evidently imply, that Christ declared himself to his disciples to be the everlasting God?

11. *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*—We are essentially one; and those who have seen me have seen him who sent me.

12. *The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*—We are not only one in nature, but one also in operation. The works which I have done bear witness of the infinite perfection of my nature. Such miracles as I have wrought could only be performed by unlimited power.

13. *And greater works than these*—The miracles which I have wrought could not have been wrought but by the omnipotence of God; but that omnipotence can work greater. And those who believe on my name shall, through my almighty power, be enabled to work greater miracles than

those which I have ordinarily wrought. An impostor might seduce the people by false miracles; but he could not make his power and cunning pass to all those who were seduced by him: But I will give you this proof of the divinity of my mission and the truth of my doctrine. Perhaps the "greater works" refer to the immense multitudes that were brought to God by the ministry of the apostles. By the apostles was the doctrine of Christ spread far and wide; while Christ confined his ministry chiefly to the precincts of Judea. It is certainly the greatest miracle of divine grace, to convert the obstinate, wicked heart of man from sin to holiness. This was done in numberless cases by the disciples, who were endued with power from on high, while proclaiming remission of sins through faith in his blood.

Some account for the greater works thus: (1.) The very shadow of Peter healed the diseased, Acts v. 15. (2.) Diseases were cured, and demons cast out, by applying to the persons handkerchiefs and aprons that had before touched the body of Paul, Acts xix. 12. (3.) By the word of Peter, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, Acts v. 5, 9, 10. (4.) Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by the word of Paul, Acts xiii. 11. (5.) Christ only preached in Judea, and in the language only of that country; but the apostles preached through most of the then known world, and in all the languages of all countries. But let it be remarked, that all this was done by the power of Christ; and I think it still more natural to attribute the "greater works" to the greater number of conversions made under the apostles' ministry. The reason which our Lord gives for this is worthy of deep attention: "Because I go unto my Father," where I shall be an Intercessor for you, that "whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," to enable you to perform these miracles, and to convert souls, may be granted you. Besides, by going unto the Father, I shall receive the Holy Spirit, and send down his abundant influences into the hearts of those who believe.

SECTION CXCIX.—CHRIST PROMISES THE SPIRIT.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XIV. 15—31.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.¹ And I will pray the Father,² and he shall give you another Comforter,³ that he may abide with you for ever; ⁴ *even* the Spirit of truth; ⁵ whom the world cannot receive,⁶ because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye know him; ⁷ for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: ⁸ I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: Because I live,⁹ ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father,¹⁰ and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man¹¹ love me, he will keep my words: And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not¹² keepeth not my sayings: And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,¹³ and bring all things to your remembrance,¹⁴ whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you,¹⁵ my peace I give unto you:¹⁶ Not as the world giveth,¹⁷ give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.¹⁸ Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away,¹⁹ and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice,²⁰ because I said, I go unto the Father: For my Father is greater than I.²¹ And now I have told you before it come to pass,²² that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

1. *If ye love me, keep my commandments*—Do not be afflicted at the thought of my being separated from you; the most solid proof ye can give of your attachment to and affection for me is to keep my commandments. This I shall receive as a greater proof of your affection than your tears.

2. *I will pray the Father*—After having made an atonement for the sin of the world, I will become the Mediator between God and man; and through my mediation and intercession shall all the blessings of grace and glory be acquired.

3. *Another Comforter*—The word signifies not only a "comforter," but also an "ad-

vocate," a "defender" of a cause, a "counsellor, patron, mediator." Christ is thus termed, 1 John ii. 1, where the common translation renders the word "Advocate." Christ is thus called, because he is represented as transacting the concerns of our souls with God; and for this cause, he tells us, he goes unto the Father. The Holy Spirit is thus called, because he transacts the cause of God and Christ with us, explains to us the nature and importance of the great atonement, shows the necessity of it, counsels us to receive it, instructs us how to lay hold on it, vindicates our claim to it, and makes intercessions in us with unutterable groanings. As Christ acted with his disciples while he sojourned with them, so the Holy Ghost acts with those who believe in his name.

4. *For ever*—As the death and atonement of Christ will be necessary to man till the conclusion of the world, so the office of the Holy Spirit must be continued among men till the end of time: Therefore, says Christ, "He shall continue with you for ever," teaching, comforting, advising, defending, and interceding for you and for all my followers to the end of time.

5. *The Spirit of truth*—The Spirit, or Holy Ghost, whose essential office is to manifest, vindicate, and apply the truth. The gospel of Christ may be thus called, because it exposes falsity, removes error, and teaches the knowledge of the true God, shows the way to him, saves from vanity and illusive hopes, and establishes solid happiness in the souls of those who believe.

6. *The world cannot receive*—By "the world," St. John means those who are influenced only by the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. Now these cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because they see him not, have no spiritual discernment, attend to nothing but the dictates of their corrupt passions and affections, and will admit of no influence but what can be an object of their senses. Hence all the deism and irreligion in the world. God, in the operation of his hands, and in the influences of his Spirit, is found every where except in the perverted passions of men. In these alone do men of corrupt minds seek him; here only he is not to be found; and therefore they become infidels and atheists.

7. *But ye know him*—Ye have already received a measure of the truth, and ye believe in this Spirit.

8. *I will not leave you comfortless*—The disciples of a particular teacher among the Hebrews called him "father;" his scholars were called his "children," and, on his death, were considered as orphans. Christ calls his disciples "children, beloved children;" and, now that he is about to be removed from them by death, he assures them that they shall not be left fatherless, or without a teacher; for, in a little time, he should come again, rise from the dead, and, after his ascension, they should be made partakers of that Spirit which would be their Comforter, Advocate, Teacher, and Guide for ever.

9. *Because I live*—As surely as I shall rise from the dead, so shall ye. My resurrection shall be the proof and pledge of yours. And because I live a life of intercession for you at the right hand of God, ye shall live a life of grace and peace here, and a life of glory hereafter.

10. *That I am in my Father*—After my resurrection, ye shall be more fully convinced of this important truth, that "I and the Father are one;" for I will live in you by the energy of my Spirit, and ye shall live in me by faith, love, and obedience.

11. *If a man*—Not only my present disciples, but all those who shall believe on me through their word, or that of their successors: "Love me," receive me as his Saviour, and get the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost: "He will keep my words;" observe all my sayings, and have his affections and conduct regulated by my Spirit and doctrine: "My Father will love him;" call him his child; support, defend, and preserve him as such: "And we will come unto him;" God the Father, through his Son, will continue to pour out his choicest blessings upon his head and upon his heart: "And make our abode with him;" will make his heart our temple, where God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, shall rest, receive homage, and dwell to eternity. Thus will "I manifest myself" to the believing, loving, obedient disciple, and "not to the world," who will not receive the Spirit of the truth.

12. *He that loveth me not, &c.*—Hence

we learn, that the man who is not obedient to the testimonies of Christ does not love him; and the Spirit of this truth has said, "He who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."

13. *He shall teach you all things*—If in the things which I have already spoken to you there appear to you any obscurity, the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, Counsellor, and Instructor, will take away all your doubts, free you from all embarrassment, and give you a perfect understanding in all things; and this Spirit ye shall shortly receive.

14. *And bring all things to your remembrance*—Here Christ promises them that inspiration of the Holy Spirit which enabled them, not only to give a true history of his life and death, but also gave them the most perfect recollection of all the words which he had spoken to them; so that they have been able to transmit to posterity the identical words which Jesus uttered in his sermons, and in his different discourses with them, the Jews, and others.

15. *Peace I leave with you*—The Jewish form of salutation and benediction. A wish of peace among them is thus to be understood: "May you prosper in body and soul, and enjoy every earthly and heavenly good!"

16. *My peace I give unto you*—Such tranquillity of soul, such uninterrupted happiness of mind, such everlasting friendship with God, as I enjoy, may ye all enjoy! And such blessedness I bequeath unto you: It is my last, my best, my dying legacy.

17. *Not as the world giveth*—Not as the Jews, in empty wishes; not as the people of the world, in empty compliments. Their salutations and benedictions are generally matters of custom and polite ceremony, given without desire or design; but I mean what I say; what I wish you, that I will give you. To his followers Jesus gives peace, procures it, preserves it, and establishes it. He is the Author, Prince, Promoter, and Keeper of peace.

18. *Neither let it be afraid*—In a few hours ye will be most powerfully assaulted; but stand firm; the evil will only fall upon me; and this evil will result in your com-

fort and salvation, and in the redemption of a lost world.

19. *I go away*—To the Father by my death: "And come again unto you;" by my resurrection.

20. *Ye would rejoice*—Because, as the Messiah, I am going to receive a kingdom, and power, and glory, for ever. Therefore, as my friends, ye should rejoice in my elevation, though for a while it may put you to the pain of being separated from me: Besides, I am going, that I may send you the Holy Spirit, which shall fill you with the fulness of God: On your own account, therefore, ye should have rejoiced, and not mourned.

21. *My Father is greater than I*—In verse 24, Christ tells his disciples, that the Father had sent him; that is, in his quality of Messiah, he was sent by the Father to instruct and to save mankind. Now, as the sender is greater than the sent, so in this sense is the Father greater than the Son. It certainly requires very little argument, and no sophistry, to reconcile this saying with the most orthodox notion of the Godhead of Christ; as he is repeatedly speaking of his divine and of his human nature. Of the former he says, "I and the Father are one;" and of the latter he states, with the same truth, "The Father is greater than I."

22. *I have told you before it come to pass*—Lest my death should be a stumbling-block to you, I have spoken of it beforehand, and showed you the necessity of it, that when it happens ye may believe, that as I could predict it so clearly, and so circumstantially, so all the good which I have promised shall be the result, may be confidently expected by you; and that your sorrow, if not entirely removed, may at least be much mitigated.

The reader should carefully note the conduct of our Lord. He goes to die as a sacrifice, out of love to mankind, in obedience to the divine will, and with unshaken courage. All our actions should be formed on this plan. They should have the love of God and man for their principle and motive; his glory for their end; and his will for their rule. He who lives and acts thus shall live for ever. Amen.

SECTION CC.—CHRIST THE TRUE VINE.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XV. 1—11.

I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me¹ that beareth not fruit he taketh away :² And every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it,³ that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me,⁴ and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : For without me ye can do nothing.⁵ If a man abide not in me,⁶ he is cast forth⁷ as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified,⁸ that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : Continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments,⁹ ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you,¹⁰ and *that* your joy might be full.¹¹

1. *Every branch in me*—I stand in the same relation to my followers, and they to me, as the vine to the branches, and the branches to the vine.

2. *He taketh away*—As the vine-dresser will remove every unfruitful branch from the vine, so will my Father remove every unfruitful member from my mystical body ; such as Judas, the unbelieving Jews, the apostatizing disciples, and all false and merely nominal Christians, who are attached to the vine by faith in the word and *divine* mission of Christ, while they live not in his life and Spirit, and bring forth no fruit to the glory of God ; and also every branch which has been in him by true faith, such as have given way to iniquity, and made shipwreck of their faith and of their good conscience : All these he "taketh away."

3. *He purgeth it*—"He pruneth." He who brings forth fruit to God's glory, according to his light and power, will have the hinderances taken away from his heart ; for his very thoughts shall be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

4. *Abide in me*—Hold fast faith and a good conscience ; and let no trials turn you aside from the truth. "And I" will abide "in you." Ye shall receive every help and influence from me that your souls can require, in order to preserve and save them to eternal life.

These two things are absolutely necessary to our salvation : (1.) That we continue closely united to Christ by faith and love, and live in and to him. (2.) That we continually receive from him the power to do good ; for "as the branch," however good in itself, "cannot bear fruit from itself," through its own juice, which it has already derived from the tree, and can be no longer supported than it continues in union with the parent stock, "neither can ye, unless ye abide in me." As the branch partakes of the nature of the tree, is nourished by its juice, and lives by its life, so ye must be made partakers of my divine nature, be wise in my wisdom, powerful in my might, and pure through my holiness.

5. *Without me ye can do nothing*—"Separated from me, ye can do nothing at

all." God can do without man, but man cannot do without God. Following the metaphor of our Lord, it would be just as possible to do any good without him, as for a branch to live, thrive, and bring forth fruit, while cut off from that tree from which it not only derives its juices, but its very existence also.

6. *If a man abide not in me*—Our Lord in the plainest manner intimates, that a person may as truly be united to him as the branch is to the tree that produces it, and yet be afterwards cut off and cast into the fire; because he has not brought forth fruit to the glory of his God. No man can cut off a branch from a tree to which that branch was never united: It is absurd, and contrary to the letter and spirit of the metaphor, to talk of being seemingly in Christ, because this means nothing. If there was only a seeming union, there could be only a seeming excision: So the matter is just where it began; nothing is done on either side, and nothing said to any purpose.

7. *He is cast forth*—Observe, that person who abides not in Christ, in a believing, loving, obedient spirit, is, (1.) Cut off from Jesus, having no longer any right or title to him or to his salvation. (2.) He is "withered," deprived of all the influences of God's grace and Spirit; loses all his heavenly unction; becomes indifferent, cold, and dead to every holy and spiritual word and work. (3.) He is "gathered," becomes (through the judgment of God) again united with backsliders like himself, and other workers of iniquity; and, being abandoned to his own heart and Satan, he is, (4.) "Cast into the fire," separated from God's people, from God himself, and from the glory of his power. And, (5.) "He is burned," is eternally tormented with the devil and his angels, and with all those who have lived and died in their iniquity. Reader, pray God that this may never be thy portion.

"If we abide not in this justifying faith, if we depart uncleansed by the all-purifying blood, and unhallowed by the all-sanctifying Spirit; how great in the tremendous day will be our self-reproach, our condemnation of ourselves! 'Ah! my soul, in vain didst thou begin thy voyage; in vain wert thou freighted with celestial merchandise;

and stored with celestial provisions; in vain did the billows bear thee; in vain did the breezes waft thee; in vain did angels accompany thy bark; Jesus in vain presided at the helm! Thou didst reject thy Pilot, although that Pilot was the incarnate Deity, and that Deity the oblation for thy sin! He averted his sacred countenance; he left thee to perish in the deep; to go down for ever.' Such will be the language of our complaint, if we contemn the proffered grace, and neglect so high a calling. From that extremest, endless, nameless woe, 'benign Redeemer, save us!'" —H. S. BOYD.

Observe, in order to have influence with God, we must, (1.) Be united to Christ. "If ye abide in me." (2.) That, in order to be preserved in this union, we must have our lives regulated by the doctrine of Christ: "And my words abide in you." (3.) That to profit by this union and doctrine, we must pray: "Ye shall ask." (4.) That every heavenly blessing shall be given to those who continue in this union, with a loving, obedient, praying spirit: "Ye shall ask what ye will," &c.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified*—Or, "honoured." It is the honour of the husbandman to have good, strong, vigorous vines, plentifully laden with fruit: So it is the honour of God to have strong, vigorous, holy children, entirely freed from sin, and perfectly filled with his love.

9. *If ye keep my commandments, &c.*—Hence we learn, that it is impossible to retain a sense of God's pardoning love, without continuing in the obedience of faith.

10. *That my joy might remain in you*—That the joy which I now feel, on account of your steady, affectionate attachment to me, may be lasting, I give you both warnings and directions, that ye may abide in the faith.

11. *That your joy might be full*—Or, "complete," "filled up:" A metaphor taken from a vessel, into which water or any other thing is poured, till it is full to the brim. The religion of Christ expels all misery from the hearts of those who receive it in its fulness. It was to drive wretchedness out of the world that Jesus came into it.

"If we are destitute of Christian com-

fort and joy, it is, I think, of essential importance, to have the conviction deeply impressed upon our minds, that the cause is in ourselves, entirely in ourselves. It is not God that withdraws from us; but we that withdraw from God. When we have withdrawn, indeed, and, by our backsliding, deprived ourselves of the joy of the Lord,

and of the light of his countenance, he may make us to feel our folly and our sin, by refraining, for a time, from restoring it. But still, let us remember, that the cause is in us; and that, in every instance in which the effect does not arise from bodily or mental disorder, the cause is, in its nature, criminal."—WARDLAW.

SECTION CCI.—MUTUAL LOVE ENJOINED.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XV. 12—27.

THIS is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.¹ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me,² but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you,³ ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because ye are not of the world,⁴ but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.⁵ If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: But now they have no cloke for their sin.⁶ He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness,⁷ because ye have been with me from the beginning.

1. *That a man lay down his life for his friends*—No man can carry his love for his friend farther than this; for when he gives up his life, he gives up all that he has.

This proof of my love for you I shall give in a few hours; and the doctrine which I recommend to you, I am just going to exemplify myself. There are several remarkable cases, in heathen antiquity, where one friend offered his life for another. But when all these instances of rare friendship and affection are seen, read, and admired, let the affected reader turn his astonished eyes to Jesus, pouring out his blood, not for his friends, but for his enemies; and, in the agonies of death, making supplication for his murderers, with "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and then let him help exclaiming, if he can,

"O, Lamb of God, was ever pain,
Was ever love, like thine?"

"All-gracious God, what is it that I behold? The Sun of the universe is veiled in the cloud of our humanity; the Everlasting is born in time; the Immortal becomes a mortal; he deigns to dwell amongst us: But in what condition? He is poor, destitute, afflicted; he comes to give joy to others, while from his own breast it is excluded. In that dim eye no pleasure sparkles; no smile irradiates that pallid countenance; no sounds burst from those lips, save only the notes of sorrow, of sorrow, not for his own estate, but for our condition. His whole life is one continued suffering; and this suffering is but the preliminary of woe. The hour is come. The Almighty rises from his throne, to vindicate his justice, and to destroy sin. But O! not against us are the lightnings of his wrath directed; the sin-avenging thunderbolts all, yea, all of them, are bursting on that devoted head, on the head of him, his true, his beloved, his only Son. In the garden of Gethsemane he endures a conflict, whose agony transcends the agony of the damned, and would have crushed the spirit of an archangel. Ah! it is but begun! He is hurried from Gethsemane, he is dragged to Calvary, he is stretched upon a cross; to the infinitude of suffering is added the extremity of degradation: The Creator of earth and heaven is suspended between both, and belongs to neither; the despised of man, the forsaken of God, the outcast of the universe! The storm increases, it rises to its climax, and the expiatory work is perfected. Yes,

blessed Saviour, thy work is perfected. We celebrate thy victorious passion, while we shudder at the remembrance. O agony unparalleled! O sufferings ineffable and inconceivable! Ah! they were greater than men, or angels, or any but the Omniscent, can comprehend."—H. S. BOYD.

2. *Ye have not chosen me*—To be a genuine preacher of the gospel, (1.) A man must be chosen of God to the work. (2.) He must be placed in the true Vine,—united to Christ by faith. (3.) He must not think to lead an idle life, but labour. (4.) He must not wait till work be brought to him, but he must go and seek it. (5.) He must labour so as to bring forth fruit, that is, to get souls converted to the Lord. (6.) He must refer all his fruit to God, who gave him the power to labour, and blessed him in his work. (7.) He must take care to water what he has planted, that his fruit may remain,—that the souls whom he has gathered in be not scattered from the flock. (8.) He must continue instant in prayer, that his labours may be accompanied with the presence and blessing of God: "Whatsoever ye shall ask." (9.) He must consider Jesus Christ as the great Mediator between God and man, proclaim his salvation, and pray in his name: "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name," &c.

3. *If the world hate you*—As the followers of Christ were to be exposed to the hatred of the world, it was no small consolation to them to know that that hatred would be only in proportion to their faith and holiness; and that, consequently, instead of being troubled at the prospect of persecution, they should rejoice, because that should always be a proof to them that they were in the very path in which Jesus himself had trod.

4. *Because ye are not of the world, &c.*—On this very account, because ye do not join in fellowship with those who know not God, therefore they hate you.

5. *Because they know not him that sent me*—This is the foundation of all religious persecution; those who are guilty of it, whether in church or state, know nothing about God. If God tolerates a worship which professes to have him for its object, and which does not disturb the quiet or peace of society, no man has the smallest right to meddle with it; and he that does,

fighths against God. His letting it pass is, at least, a tacit command that all should treat it as he has done.

6. *But now they have no cloke for their sin*—They are without excuse. Christ had done such works as demonstrated him to be the Messiah; yet they rejected him: Here lay their sin; and this sin, and the punishment to which it exposed them, still remain; for they still continue to reject the Lord that bought them.

7. *He shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness*—He shall bear his testimony in your souls, and ye shall bear this testimony to the world. And so they did, by their miracles, their preaching, their writings, their lives, and by their deaths. Our Lord appears to reason thus: In every respect the unbelief of the Jews is inexcusable. They believe not my doctrine, notwithstanding its purity and holiness; they believe not in the Father who sent me, notwithstanding I have confirmed my mission by the most astonishing miracles. One thing only remains now to be done, that is to send them the Holy Spirit, to convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and this he shall do, not only by his influence upon their hearts, but also by your words. And when they shall have resisted this Spirit, then the cup of their iniquity shall be filled up, and wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost.

But in what sense can it be said, that Christ wrought more miracles than any other had done? for Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, cured diseases, and made fire to come down from heaven. Did Christ do greater miracles than Moses did in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at the rock of Horeb, and at the rock of Kadesh? Did

Christ do greater miracles than Joshua did in the destruction of Jericho, in the passage of Jordan, in causing the sun and moon to stand still? To all this it may be answered, Christ's miracles were greater, (1.) As to their number. (2.) As to their utility: They were wrought to comfort the distressed, and to save the lost. (3.) Christ wrought all his miracles by his own power alone; and they wrought theirs through his power only. (4.) Christ wrought his numerous miracles in the space of three or four years, and in the presence of the same people; and the others were wrought from time to time, in different centuries.

(1.) The spiritual union spoken of by Christ is not merely necessary for his primitive disciples, but also for all who would be Christians on earth, and beatified spirits in heaven. (2.) The brotherly love here inculcated is the duty and interest of every Christian soul on the face of the earth. (3.) The necessity of adorning the Christian profession, by bringing forth corresponding fruits, is the duty of all who name the name of the Lord Jesus. (4.) The appointment to, and preparation for, the work of the sacred ministry, must ever be primarily with Christ; for those who have no higher authority than that which they derive from man, are never likely to be useful in Christianizing the world. (5.) The persecution to which the apostles were exposed has been the common lot of Christians from the foundation of Christianity. (6.) The consolations and influences of Christ's Spirit have not been the exclusive privileges of the apostles; they are the birthright of all the sons and daughters of God.

SECTION CCII.—PREPARATION FOR PERSECUTION.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XVI. 1—15.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: ¹ Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, ² nor me. But these things have I

told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: ³ For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove ⁴ the world ⁵ of sin, ⁶ and of righteousness, ⁷ and of judgment: ⁸ Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. ⁹ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you ¹⁰ into all truth: For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, ¹¹ that shall he speak: And he will shew you things to come. ¹² He shall glorify me: For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. ¹³ All things that the Father hath are mine: ¹⁴ Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.

1. *They shall put you out of the synagogues*—They will excommunicate you, and consider you as execrable, and utterly unworthy to hold any commerce with God by religion, or with man by civil fellowship.

2. *Because they have not known the Father*—Ignorance of the benevolence of God, and of the philanthropy of Christ, is the grand fountain whence all religious persecution and intolerance proceed.

3. *It is expedient for you that I go away*—In other places he had showed them the absolute necessity of his death for the salvation of men: This he does not repeat here, but shows them that, by the order of God, the Holy Spirit cannot come to them, nor to the world, unless he first die; and consequently men cannot be saved but in this way.

4. *He will reprove*—He will demonstrate these matters so clearly, as to leave no doubt on the minds of those who are simple of heart; and so fully, as to confound and shut the mouths of those who are gain-sayers.

5. *The world*—The Jewish nation first, and afterwards the Gentile world; for his

influences shall not be confined to one people, place, or time.

6. *Of sin*—Of the sin of the Jews in not receiving me as the Messiah, though my mission was accredited by the very miracles which the prophets foretold. This was literally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was given; for multitudes of Jews were then convinced of this sin, and converted to God.

If we take this prediction of our Lord in a more general sense, then we may consider, that it is one of the grand offices of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin, to show men what sin is, to demonstrate to them that they are sinners, and to show the necessity of an atonement for sin.

7. *Of righteousness*—Of my innocence and holiness, because I go away to my Father; of which my resurrection from the dead, and my ascension to heaven, shall be complete proofs. Christ was treated by the Jews as an impostor; as a magician; as one possessed by the devil; as a wicked person, seducer, and destroyer of the law. His vindication from these charges he chiefly referred to the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who, by his influences on the

minds of the people, and by his eloquence and energy in the ministry of the apostles, convinced both the Jews and the Gentiles, that the sentence of the Jewish rulers was unjust and infamous, and that the very person whom they had crucified was both Lord and Christ;—Lord, the great Governor of the universe; and Christ, the Lord's Anointed, the promised Messiah. It was a matter of the utmost consequence to the Christian cause, to have the innocence and holiness of its Founder demonstrated, and the crime of the Jews, in putting him to death, made manifest to the world. This also has been literally fulfilled; the universe that has heard of him believes the righteousness and innocence of Jesus; and the Jews, his persecutors, are confounded and execrated throughout the habitable globe.

8. *Of judgment*—Of the false judgment of the Jews in condemning the Lord Jesus, who, as some think, is intended here by "the ruler of this world." Others think that satan is meant, whose usurped power over the world was now to be greatly restrained, and by and by totally destroyed. Perhaps our Lord's meaning is, that as a most astonishing judgment, or punishment, was now about to fall upon the Jews, in consequence of their obstinate infidelity, the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of the apostles, should demonstrate that this judgment, severe as it might seem, was amply merited by this worst of all people; and may we not say, that their continuance in the same crime sufficiently vindicates the judgment of God, not only in its being poured out upon them at first, but in continuing to pursue them?

One general exposition may be given of these three verses: The Holy Spirit will convince the world "of sin" committed, and guilt and condemnation thereby incurred: "Of righteousness;" of the necessity of being pardoned, and made righteous through the blood of the Lamb, who, after being offered up for sin, went to the Father, ever to appear in his presence as our Intercessor: And "of judgment;" of the great day thereof, when none shall be able to stand but those whose sins are pardoned, and whose souls are made righteous. In all that our Lord says here, there seems to be an allusion to the office of an advocate in a cause, in a

court of justice; who, by producing witnesses, and pleading upon the proof, convicts the opposite party of sin, demonstrates the righteousness of his client, and shows the necessity of passing judgment upon the accuser.

The faith of the gospel discovers unto us three different states of man: It shows him, (1.) Under sin, in which there is nothing but infidelity towards God, because there is no faith in Jesus Christ. (2.) Under grace, in which sin is pardoned, and righteousness acquired by faith in Christ; who is gone to the Father to carry on, by his intercession, the great work of redemption. (3.) In the peace and glory of heaven, where Christ will reign with his members; the devil, with his angels and servants, being banished into hell by the last judgment.

Thus, in the Christian revelation, we are made acquainted with three grand truths, which contain the sum and substance of all true religion. The first is the general corruption of human nature, and the reign of sin till the coming of Christ. The second is the reparation of our nature by the Lord Jesus, and the reign of righteousness by his grace. The third is the condemnation of sinners, and the total destruction of the kingdom of sin, and of all the power of the devil, by the last judgment.

9. *Ye cannot bear them now*—In illustration of these three points, Christ had many things to say; but he found that his disciples could only bear general truths; yet in saying what he did, he sowed the seeds of the whole system of theological knowledge, and heavenly wisdom, which the Holy Spirit of this truth afterwards watered and ripened into a glorious harvest of light and salvation, by the ministry of the apostles.

10. *He will guide you*—He will consider your feeble infant state; and, as a father leads his child by the hand, so will the Holy Spirit lead and guide you.

11. *But whatsoever he shall hear*—Of the Father and me, that he shall speak, and thus show the intimate consent between himself, the Father, and Christ. It is one conjoint testimony, in which the honour and glory of the Holy Trinity and man's salvation are equally concerned.

12. *And he will shew you things to come*—He will fully explain every thing that may

now appear dark or difficult to you; will give you such a knowledge of futurity as shall, in all necessary cases, enable you to foretell future events; and shall supply every requisite truth, in order to make the new-covenant revelation complete and perfect.

13. *And shew it unto you*—As Christ is

represented the Ambassador of the Father, so the Holy Spirit is represented the Ambassador of the Son, coming vested with his authority, as the Interpreter and Executor of his will.

14. *All things that the Father hath are mine*—If Christ had not been equal to God, could he have said this without blasphemy?

SECTION CCIII.—CHRIST THE ONLY MEDIATOR.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XVI. 16—33.

A LITTLE while,¹ and ye shall not see me: And again, a little while,² and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said *some* of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: And again, a little while, and ye shall see me: And, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: And again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.³ And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.⁴ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:⁵ Ask,⁶ and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: But the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:⁷ For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things,⁸ and needest not that any man should ask thee:

By this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh,⁹ yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.¹⁰ In the world ye shall have tribulation: But be of good cheer; ¹¹ I have overcome the world.¹²

1. *A little while*—He had but a few hours to live: "And ye shall not see me;" I shall be hidden from your view in the grave.

2. *Again, a little while*—In three days after my death. "Ye shall see me;" I will rise again, and show myself to you. Or, As I am going by my ascension to the Father, in a short time, ye shall see me personally no more; but in a little while I shall pour out my Spirit upon you, and others through your ministry; and ye shall see me virtually in the great and wonderful work which shall then take place in the hearts and lives of men.

3. *Your joy no man taketh from you*—Our Lord's meaning appears to have been this: That his resurrection should be so completely demonstrated to them, that they should never have a doubt concerning it; and, consequently, that their joy should be great and permanent, knowing that the atonement was made, the victory gained, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. Therefore is it said, that "with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

4. *Ye shall ask me nothing*—Ye shall then be led, by that Spirit which guides into all truth, to consider me in the character of Mediator in the kingdom of God, and to address your prayers to the Father "in my name;" in the name of Jesus the Saviour, because I have died to redeem you; in the name of Christ the Anointer, because I have ascended to send down the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name*—Ye have not as yet considered me the great Mediator between God and man; but this is one of the truths which shall be more fully revealed to you by the Holy Spirit.

6. *Ask*—In my name; "and ye shall receive" all the salvation ye thus request;

the consequence of which shall be, that "your joy shall be full;" ye shall be thoroughly happy, in being made completely holy.

7. *I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you*—I need not tell you that I will continue your Intercessor; I have given you already so many proofs of my love, that ye cannot possibly doubt this; besides, the Father himself needs no entreaty to do you good; for he loves you, and is graciously disposed to save you to the uttermost, because ye have loved me, and believed in me as coming from God, for the salvation of the world.

8. *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things*—Is not the following the meaning of the disciples? "We believe that thou art not only the Messiah who camest out from God, but that thou art that God who searchest the heart and triest the reins, and needest not to be asked in order to make thee acquainted with the necessities of thy creatures; for thou perfectly knowest their wants, and art infinitely disposed to relieve them."

9. *The hour cometh*—Ye shall shortly have need of all the faith ye profess; ye now believe me to be the Omniscient; but ye will find difficulty to maintain this faith when ye see me seized, condemned, and crucified as a malefactor. Yea, your faith will be then so shaken, that ye shall run away, each striving to save himself at his own home, or among his kindred.

10. *That in me ye might have peace*—I give you this warning, as another proof that I know all things, and to the end that ye may look to me alone for peace and happiness. The peace of God is ever to be understood as including all possible blessedness; light, strength, comfort, support, a sense of the divine favour, unction of the Holy Spirit, purification of heart, &c., &c.; and all these to be enjoyed in Christ.

11. *Be of good cheer*—Do not despond on account of what I have said; the world shall not be able to overcome you, how severely soever it may try you.

12. *I have overcome the world*—I am just now going, by my death, to put it and its god to the rout. My apparent weakness shall be my victory; my ignominy shall be my glory; and the victory which the world, the devil, and my adversaries in general, shall appear to gain over me, shall be their own lasting defeat, and my eternal triumph. "Fear not."

One of the grand subjects in this chapter, the mediation of Christ, is but little understood by most Christians. Christ, having made an atonement for the sin of the world, has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there he appears in the presence of God for us. In approaching the throne of grace, we keep Jesus, as our sacrificial victim, continually in view; our

prayer should be directed through him to the Father; and, under the conviction that his passion and death have purchased every possible blessing for us, we should, with humble confidence, ask the blessings we need; and, as in him the Father is ever well-pleased, we should most confidently expect the blessings he has purchased. We may consider, also, that his appearance before the throne, in his sacrificial character, constitutes the great principle of mediation or intercession. He has taken our nature into heaven; in that he appears before the throne; this, without a voice, speaks loudly for the sinful race of Adam, for whom it was assumed, and on whose account it was sacrificed. On these grounds every penitent and every believing soul may ask and receive, and their joy be complete. By the sacrifice of Christ, we approach God; through the mediation of Christ, God comes down to man.

SECTION CCIV.—CHRIST OFFERS THE GREAT SACRIFICIAL PRAYER.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XVII. 1—12.

THESE words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power¹ over all flesh, that he should give eternal life² to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal,³ that they might know thee the only true God,⁴ and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee⁵ on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.⁶ I have manifested thy name⁷ unto the men which thou gavest me⁸ out of the world: Thine they were,⁹ and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.¹⁰ Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world,¹¹ but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the

world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

1. *As thou hast given him power*—As the Messiah, Jesus Christ received from the Father universal dominion. "All flesh," that is, all the human race, was given unto him, that by one sacrifice of himself he might reconcile them all to God; having by his grace tasted death for every man. And this was according to the promise of the universal inheritance made to Christ, which was to be made up of the Heathen, and the uttermost parts of the land, all the Jewish people. So that he got all from God, that he might give his life a ransom for the whole.

2. *That he should give eternal life, &c.*—As all were delivered into his power, and he poured out his blood to redeem all, then the design of God is, that all should have eternal life, because all are given for this purpose to Christ; and, that this end might be accomplished, he has become their Sacrifice and Atonement.

3. *This is life eternal*—The salvation purchased by Christ, and given to them who believe, is called "life:" (1.) Because the life of man was forfeited to divine justice; and the sacrifice of Christ redeemed him from that death to which he was exposed. (2.) Because the souls of men were dead in trespasses and sins; and Christ quickens them by his word and Spirit. (3.) Because men who are not saved by the grace of Christ do not live, they only exist; no good purpose of life being answered by them. But when they receive this salvation they live—answer all the divine purposes, are happy in themselves, useful to each other, and bring glory to God. (4.) It is called "eternal life," to show, that it reaches beyond the limits of time, and that it necessarily implies, (i.) The immortality of the soul; (ii.) The resurrection of the body; and, (iii.) That it is never to end, hence called a "life ever-living." And, indeed, no words can more forcibly convey the idea of eternity than these. It is called, "that eternal life," by way of eminence. There may be an eternal existence without

blessedness; but this is that eternal life with which infinite happiness is inseparably connected.

4. *The only true God*—The way to attain this eternal life is to acknowledge, worship, and obey, the one only true God, and to accept as Teacher, Sacrifice, and Saviour, the Lord Jesus, the one and only true Messiah.

5. *I have glorified thee*—Our Lord, considering himself as already sacrificed for the sin of the world, speaks of having completed the work which God had given him to do; and he looks forward to that time when, through the preaching of his gospel, his sacrifice should be acknowledged, and the true God should be known and worshipped by the whole world.

6. *Before the world was*—That is, from eternity, before there was any creation; so the phrase, and others similar to it, are taken in the sacred writings. Let the glory of my eternal Divinity surround and penetrate my humanity, in its resurrection, ascension, and in the place which it is to occupy at thy right hand, far above all creatures.

7. *I have manifested thy name*—I have brought it into light, and caused it to shine in itself, and to illuminate others. A little of the Divine Nature was known by the works of creation; a little more was known by the Mosaic revelation: But the full manifestation of God, his nature, and his attributes, came only through the revelation of Christ.

8. *The men which thou gavest me*—That is, the apostles, who, having received this knowledge from Christ, were, by their preaching and writings, to spread it through the whole world.

9. *Thine they were*—Objects of thy choice; "and thou gavest them to me" from among this very unbelieving people, that they might be my disciples and the heralds of my salvation.

10. *And they have kept thy word*—Though their countrymen have rejected it;

and they have received me as thy well-beloved Son in whom thou delightest.

11. *I pray not for the world*—I am not yet come to that part of my intercession: See verse 20. I am now wholly employed for my disciples, that they may be properly qualified to preach my salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus here imitates the high priest; the second part of whose prayer, on the day of expiation, was for the priests,

the sons of Aaron. These words may also be understood as applying to the rebellious Jews. God's wrath was about to descend upon them, and Christ prays that his own followers might be kept from the evil. But he does not thus pray for the world, the rebellious Jews, because the cup of their iniquity was full, and their judgment slumbered not.

SECTION CCV.—CHRIST PRAYS FOR UNITY.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XVII. 13—26.

AND NOW come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world,¹ but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them² through thy truth:³ Thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself,⁴ that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone,⁵ but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one;⁶ as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know⁷ that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory,⁸ which thou hast given me: For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: But I have known thee, and these have known⁹ that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:¹⁰ That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

1. *That thou shouldst take them out of the world*—They must not yet leave the land of Judea: They had not as yet borne their testimony there, concerning Christ crucified and risen again from the dead. To take them away before this work was

finished would not answer the gracious design of God. (1.) Christ does not desire that his faithful apostles should soon die, and be taken to God. No; but that they may live long, labour long, and bring forth much fruit. (2.) He does not intimate,

that they should seclude themselves from the world by going to the desert, or to the cloisters; but that they should continue in and among the world, that they may have the opportunity of recommending the salvation of God. (3.) Christ only prays that while they are in the world, employed in the work of the ministry, they may be preserved from the influence of the evil one, the devil, who had lately entered into Judas, and who would endeavour to enter into them, ruin their souls, and destroy their work. A devil *without* can do no harm; but a devil *within* ruins all.

2. *Sanctify them*—This word has two meanings: (1.) It signifies, “to consecrate, to separate from earth and common use;” and, “to devote or dedicate to God and his service.” (2.) It signifies, “to make holy or pure.” The prayer of Christ may be understood in both these senses. He prayed, (1.) That they might be fully consecrated to the work of the ministry, and separated from all worldly concerns. (2.) That they might be holy, and patterns of all holiness to those to whom they announced the salvation of God. A minister who engages himself in worldly concerns is a reproach to the gospel; and he who is not saved from his own sins can with a bad grace recommend salvation to others.

3. *Through thy truth*—It is not only according to the truth of God that ministers are to be set apart to the sacred work; but it is from that truth, and according to it, that they must preach to others. That doctrine which is not drawn from the truth of God can never save souls. God blesses no word but his own; because none is truth, without mixture of error, but that which has proceeded from himself.

4. *I sanctify myself*—I consecrate and devote myself to death, that I may thereby purchase eternal salvation for them. There seems to be here an allusion to the entering of the high priest into the holy of holies, when, having offered the sacrifice, he sprinkled the blood before the ark of the covenant. So Jesus entered into the holiest of all by his own blood, in order to obtain everlasting redemption for men.

5. *Neither pray I for these alone*—This prayer extends itself through all ages, and takes in every soul that believes in the

Lord Jesus. And what is it that Christ asks in behalf of his followers? The greatest of blessings: Unity, peace, love, and eternal glory.

6. *That they all may be one*—This prayer was literally answered to the first believers, who were all of one heart and of one soul. And why is it that believers are not in the same spirit now? Because they neither attend to the example nor to the truth of Christ.

7. *That the world may know*—That the Jewish people first, and, secondly, the Gentiles, may acknowledge me as the true Messiah, and be saved unto life eternal.

8. *That they may behold my glory*—That they may enjoy eternal felicity with me in thy kingdom. The design of Christ is, that all who believe should love and obey, persevere unto the end, and be eternally united to himself, and the ever-blessed God, in the kingdom of glory.

9. *And these have known*—Here our Lord, returning to the disciples, speaks, (1.) Of their having received him as the Messiah. (2.) Of his making the Father known unto them. (3.) Of his purpose to continue to influence them by the Spirit of truth, that they might be perfectly united to God by an indwelling Saviour for ever.

10. *And will declare it*—This he did: (1.) By the conversations he had with his disciples after his resurrection, during the space of forty days. (2.) By the Holy Spirit which was poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. And all these declarations Jesus Christ made, that the love of God, and Christ Jesus himself, might dwell in them; and thus they were to become a habitation for God through the eternal Spirit.

Our Lord's sermon on the mount shows men what they should do, so as to please God: This sermon shows them how they are to do the things prescribed in the other. In the former, the reader sees a strict morality which he fears he shall never be able to perform: In this, he sees all things are possible to him who believes; for that very God who made him shall dwell in his heart, and enable him to do all that he pleases to employ him in. No man can properly understand the nature and design of the religion of Christ who does not

enter into the spirit of the preceding discourse. Perhaps no part of our Lord's words has been less understood, or more perverted, than the seventeenth chapter of St. John. I have done what I could, in so small a compass, to make every thing plain, and to apply these words in that way in which I am satisfied he used them.

SECTION CCVI—CHRIST WARNS PETER.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 30—35; MARK XIV. 26—31;
LUKE XXII. 39; JOHN XVIII. 1.

WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, and they had sung an hymn, he went forth over the brook of Cedron, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: ¹ For it is written, I will smite the shepherd,² and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after that I am risen again,³ I will go before you⁴ into Galilee. But Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never⁵ be offended. Jesus saith⁶ unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee⁷ in any wise. Likewise also said all the disciples.

1. *This night*—The time of trial is just at hand.

2. *I will smite the shepherd*—It will happen to you as to a flock of sheep, whose shepherd has been slain. The leader and guardian being removed, the whole flock shall be scattered, and be on the point of becoming a prey to ravenous beasts.

3. *But after that I am risen again*—Do not lose your confidence; for though I shall appear for a time to be wholly left to wicked men, and be brought under the power of death, yet I will rise again, and triumph over all your enemies and mine.

4. *I will go before you*—Still alluding to the case of the shepherd and his sheep. Though the shepherd have been smitten and the sheep scattered, the shepherd shall revive again, collect the scattered flock, and go before them, and lead them to peace, security, and happiness.

5. *Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never*—The presumptuous person imagines he can do every thing,

and can do nothing: Thinks he can excel all, and excels in nothing: Promises every thing, and performs nothing. The humble man acts a quite contrary part. There is nothing we know so little of as ourselves; nothing we see less of than our own weakness and poverty. The strength of pride is only for a moment. Peter, though vainly confident, was certainly sincere; he had never been put to a sore trial, and did not know his own strength. Had this resolution of his been formed in the strength of God, he would have been enabled to maintain it against earth and hell. This most awful denial of Christ, and his abandoning him in the time of trial, was sufficient to have disqualified him for ever from being, in any sense, head of the church, had such a supremacy been ever designed him. Such a supremacy was never given him by Christ; but the fable of it is in the church of Rome, and the mock Peter, not Peter the apostle, is there and there only to be found.

6. *Jesus saith*—Our Lord's answer to Peter is very emphatic and impressive. "Verily," I speak a solemn weighty truth,

thou wilt not only be stumbled, fall off, and forsake thy Master, but thou wilt even deny that thou hast, or ever had, any knowledge of or connexion with me; and this thou wilt do, not by little and little, through a long process of time, till the apostasy, daily gathering strength, shall be complete; but thou wilt do it this very night, and that not once only, but thrice; and this thou wilt do also in the earlier part of the night, before even a cock shall crow. Was not this warning enough to him not to trust in his own strength, but to depend on God?

7. *If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*—He does not take the warning which his Lord gave him; he trusts in the warm, sincere attachment to Christ which he now feels, not considering that this must speedily fall, unless supported by the power of God.

“Pride is the master-sin of our nature; it is of the essence of all sin; its language is, ‘I will be like the Most High.’ It spurns the restraints and authority of the Supreme Lawgiver; it dissolves the ties of man to his fellow; destroys every kindly feeling; and enervates all efforts in behalf of others: It is an evil fountain, which sends forth the bitter streams of ingratitude, covetousness, bigotry, and every evil passion: It is the false fire which dances before us to allure us into the pit: It is a leprosy which overspreads us entirely, and pollutes all we touch: It is a desperation which makes us shut our eyes, and recklessly rush upon our ruin. No wonder, therefore, that Christ should first require of his disciples a child-like teachableness; a learning of him chiefly in this, that he was ‘meek and lowly of heart.’”—
F. A. WEST.

SECTION CCVII.—THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

A.D. 29.

MATTHEW XXVI. 36—46; MARK XIV. 32—42;
LUKE XXII. 40—46; JOHN XVIII. 1.

THEN cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And when he was at the place, he saith unto *them*, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,¹ James and John, and began to be sorrowful,² sore amazed, and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful,³ even unto death: Tarry ye here, and watch with me; *and* pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he went forward a little, and was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and fell on his face⁴ on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; O my Father, if it be possible, take away this cup,⁵ *and* let *it* pass from me:⁶ Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter,⁷ Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? what, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation:⁸ The spirit truly *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.⁹ And again he went away the second time, and prayed, and spake the same words, saying, O my Father, if this cup

may not pass away from me,¹⁰ except I drink it, thy will be done. And when he returned, he found them asleep again: For their eyes were heavy;¹¹ neither wist they what to answer him. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time,¹² saying the same words; saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven,¹³ strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples the third time, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And *he* saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest:¹⁴ It is enough; behold, the hour is come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.¹⁵ Rise, let us be going:¹⁶ Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

1. *And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee*—That is, James and John, the same persons who had beheld his transfiguration on the mount; that they might contemplate this agony in the light of that glory which they had there seen, and so be kept from being stumbled by a view of his present humiliation.

2. *Began to be sorrowful*—Exquisite sorrow, such as dissolves the natural vigour, and threatens to separate soul and body.

3. *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*—Or, “is surrounded with exceeding sorrow;” “even unto death.” This latter word explains the two former: My soul is so dissolved in sorrow, my spirit is filled with such agony and anguish, that if speedy succour be not given to my body, death must be the speedy consequence.

Now the grand expiatory sacrifice begins to be offered; in this garden Jesus enters fully into the sacerdotal office; and now, on the altar of his immaculate Divinity, begins to offer his own body, his own life, a Lamb without spot, for the sin of the world. St. Luke observes, that “there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him;” and that, “being in an agony,” his “sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.” How exquisite must this anguish have been, when it forced the very blood through the coats of the veins, and enlarged the pores in such a preternatural manner, as to cause them to

empty it out in large successive drops! In my opinion, the principal part of the redemption-price was paid in this unprecedented and indescribable agony. Bloody sweats are mentioned by many authors; but none was ever such as this, where a person in perfect health, having never had any predisposing sickness to induce a debility of the system, and in the full vigour of life, about thirty-three years of age, suddenly, through mental pressure, without any fear of death, sweat great drops of blood; and these continued, during his wrestling with God, to fall to the ground.

To say that all this was occasioned by the fear he had of the ignominious death which he was about to die, confutes itself; for this would not only rob him of his Divinity,—for which purpose it is brought,—but it deprives him of all excellency, and even of manhood itself. The prospect of death could not cause him to suffer thus, when he knew that in less than three days he was to be restored to life, and be brought into an eternity of blessedness. His agony and distress can receive no consistent explication but on this ground,—“He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” O glorious truth! O infinitely-meritorious suffering! And O, above all, the eternal love that caused him to undergo such sufferings for the sake of sinners!

4. *Fell on his face*—This was the ordi-

nary posture of the suppliant, when the favour was great which was asked, and deep humiliation required. The head was put between the knees, and the forehead brought to touch the earth; this was not only a humiliating, but a very painful, posture also.

5. *This cup*—The word “cup” is frequently used in the sacred writings to point out sorrow, anguish, terror, death. It seems to be an allusion to a very ancient method of punishing criminals: A cup of poison was put into their hands, and they were obliged to drink it. Socrates was killed thus, being obliged by the magistrates of Athens to drink a cup of the juice of hemlock. To death by the poisoned cup, there seems an allusion in Hebrews ii. 9: “Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.” The whole world are here represented as standing guilty and condemned before the tribunal of God; into every man’s hand the deadly cup is put, and he is required to drink off the poison: Jesus enters, takes every man’s cup out of his hand, and drinks off the poison; and thus tastes or suffers the death which every man otherwise must have undergone.

6. *And let it pass from me*—Perhaps there is an allusion here to several criminals standing in a row, who are all to drink of the same cup; but the judge extending favour to a certain one, the cup passes by him to the next.

7. *And saith unto Peter*—He addressed himself more particularly to this apostle, because of the profession he had made; as if he had said, “Is this the way you testify your affectionate attachment to me? Ye all said you were ready to die with me; what, then, cannot ye watch one hour?”

8. *Lest ye enter into temptation*—If ye cannot endure a little fatigue when there is no suffering, how will ye do when the temptation, the great trial of your fidelity and courage, cometh? “Watch,” that ye be not taken unawares; “and pray,” that, when it comes, ye may be enabled to bear it.

9. *The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak*—Your inclinations are good, ye are truly sincere; but your good purposes will be overpowered by your timidity.

Ye wish to continue steadfast in your adherence to your Master; but your fears will lead you to desert him.

10. *If this cup may not pass away from me*—If it be not possible to redeem fallen man unless I drink this cup, unless I suffer death for them, thy will be done; I am content to suffer whatever may be requisite to accomplish the great design. In this address the humanity of Christ most evidently appears; for it was his humanity alone that could suffer; and if it did not appear, that he had felt these sufferings, it would have been a presumption, that he had not suffered, and, consequently, made no atonement; and had he not appeared to have been perfectly resigned in these sufferings, his sacrifice could not have been a free-will, but a constrained, offering, and therefore of no use to the salvation of mankind.

11. *Their eyes were heavy*—That is, they could not keep them open. Was there nothing preternatural in this? Was there no influence here from the powers of darkness?

12. *Prayed the third time*—So St. Paul: “I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” This “thrice” repeating the same petition, argues deep earnestness of soul.

13. *There appeared an angel from heaven*—It was as necessary that the fullest evidence should be given, not only of our Lord’s Divinity, but also of his humanity: His miracles sufficiently attested the former; his hunger, weariness, and agony in the garden, as well as his death and burial, were proofs of the latter. As man, he needs the assistance of an angel to support his body, worn down by fatigue and suffering. After all that has been said, or perhaps can be said, on this subject, there will remain mysteries which only the bright light of the eternal world can sufficiently illustrate. That Christ was now suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, and that he was bearing in his body the punishment due to their sins, I have no doubt; and that the agony of his mind, in these vicarious sufferings, caused the effusion from his body, of the bloody sweat, may be easily credited, without supposing him to be at all under the displeasure of his heavenly Father; for, as God can see nothing

but as it is, he could not see Him as a sinner who was Purity itself. In every act, Jesus was that beloved Son in whom the Father was ever well-pleased.

As to the angel strengthening him, probably no more is meant by it than a friendly sympathizing of one of those heavenly beings with their Lord in distress: This circumstance is the most difficult in the whole relation; but, understood thus, the difficulty is removed; for what strength could the highest angel in heaven afford to our blessed Lord in his atoning acts? Surely none. The bare supposition is insupportable. But, if we allow that the angel came to sympathize with him during his passion, the whole account will appear plain and consistent.

14. *Sleep on now, and take your rest*—Perhaps it might be better to read these words interrogatively, and paraphrase them thus: "Do ye sleep on still?" Will no warnings avail? Will no danger excite you to watchfulness and prayer? "My hour," in which I am to be delivered up, "is at hand;" therefore now think of your own personal safety.

15. *The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*—The Gentiles or Heathens, who were generally distinguished by this appellation from the Jews. Here it probably means the Roman cohort that was stationed on festivals for the defence of the temple. By the Romans he was adjudged to death; for the Jews acknowledged that they had no power in capital cases.

16. *Rise, let us be going*—That is, to meet them, giving thereby the fullest proof that I know all their designs, and might have, by flight or otherwise, provided for my own safety; but I go willingly to meet that death which their malice designs me, and, through it, provide for the life of the world.

"Go, sinner, to Mount Olivet; behold Christ rolling in the dust; see that brave and magnanimous Prince stretched upon the ground; that generous Lion of the tribe of Judah prostrate on the earth; hear him, who is the only consolation of wounded spirits, complaining bitterly of sorrow surrounding him on every side; see the drops of blood with which, owing to the incredible anguish of his soul, his sacred body is stained; hear the supplications offered up with strong crying and tears. Ask the Saviour what was the real cause of anguish so immense, when, hitherto, no hostile bands, no chains, no scourge, no accusers, no judge, no cross, were present; when, on the contrary, he was in a pleasant garden, and at no great distance from his faithful disciples; and you will learn that those very sins which you have hitherto regarded so lightly were the causes of his unparalleled sorrows; those very sins, now laid on Christ, afflicted and weighed him down, and failed only to overwhelm him utterly. And can any one presume, that either no atonement for sin is necessary, or that a very slight atonement or satisfaction is sufficient?"—WITSIUS.

SECTION CCVIII.—CHRIST BETRAYED AND APPREHENDED.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 47—56; MARK XIV. 43—52;
LUKE XXII. 47—53; JOHN XVIII. 2—11.

AND Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place:¹ For Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. And immediately, while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve,² came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves,³ having received a band of *men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, scribes and elders of the people, with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things⁴ that should come

upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.⁵ Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth: Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:⁶ That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Now he that betrayed him had given them a token,⁷ saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, hold him fast, and lead *him* away safely. *And he* went before them. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master,⁸ Master; and kissed him.⁹ And Jesus said unto him, Friend,¹⁰ wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus,¹¹ and took him. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus,¹² Simon Peter, having a sword, stretched out *his* hand, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.¹³ The servant's name was Malchus. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up again thy sword into the sheath:¹⁴ For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.¹⁵ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?¹⁶ But how then¹⁷ shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? In that same hour said Jesus unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, *and* to the multitudes which were come to him, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and *with* staves, to take me? When I was daily with you¹⁸ in the temple, teaching, ye stretched forth no hands against me: But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.¹⁹ But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his* naked *body*; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled²⁰ from them naked.

1. *Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place*—As many had come from different quarters to celebrate the passover at Jerusalem, it could not be an easy matter to find lodging in the city: Jesus therefore

chose to pass the night in the garden with his disciples, which we find was his frequent custom, though he often lodged in Bethany. But, as he had supped in the city this evening, Judas took it for granted

that he had not gone to Bethany, and therefore was to be met with in the garden; and, having given this information to the priests, they gave him some soldiers and others, that he might be the better enabled to seize and bring him away.

2. *Lo, Judas, one of the twelve*—More deeply to mark his base ingratitude and desperate wickedness. He was one of the twelve, and he is a traitor, and one of the vilest, too, that ever disgraced human nature.

3. *A great multitude with swords and staves*—They did not come as officers of justice, but as a desperate mob. Justice had nothing to do in this business. He who a little before had been one of the leaders of the flock of Christ, is now become the leader of ruffians and murderers! What a terrible fall!

4. *Jesus therefore knowing all things, &c.*—He had gone through all his preaching, working of miracles, and passion, and had nothing to do now but to offer up himself on the cross: He therefore went forth to meet them, to deliver himself up to death.

5. *They went backward, and fell to the ground*—Our Lord chose to give them this proof of his infinite power, that they might know that their power could not prevail against him if he chose to exert his might, seeing that the very breath of his mouth confounded, drove back, and struck them down to the earth. Thus by the blast of God they might have perished, and by the breath of his nostrils they might have been consumed.

6. *Let these go their way*—These words are rather words of authority, than words of entreaty. I voluntarily give myself up to you, but you must not molest one of these my disciples. At your peril injure them. Let them go about their business. I have already given you a sufficient proof of my power: I will not exert it in my own behalf, for "I will lay down my life for the sheep;" but I will not permit you to injure the least of these. It was certainly the supreme power of Christ that kept the soldiers and the mob from destroying all the disciples present, when Peter had given them such provocation, in cutting off the ear of Malchus. There were probably no other disciples with Christ than Peter, James, and John, at this time.

7. *Given them a token*—How coolly deliberate is this dire apostate! The man "whom I shall kiss;" how deeply hypocritical! That "is he, hold him fast," seize him. How diabolically malicious!

8. *Hail, Master*—A usual compliment among the Jews. Judas pretends to wish our Lord continued health while he is meditating his destruction! How many compliments of this kind are there in the world! Judas had a pattern in Joab, who, while he pretends to inquire tenderly for the health of Amasa, thrust him through with his sword; but the disciple here vastly outdoes his master, and through a motive, if possible, still more base. Let all those who use unmeaning or insidious compliments rank for ever with Joab and Judas.

9. *And kissed him*—Still pretending the most affectionate attachment to him, though our Lord had before unmasked him.

10. *Jesus said unto him, Friend*—Rather, "Companion, against whom art thou come?" How must these words have cut his very soul, if he had any sensibility left! Surely, thou, who hast so long been my companion, art not come against me, thy Lord, Teacher, and Friend! What is the human heart not capable of, when abandoned by God, and influenced by satan and the love of money!

11. *Laid hands on Jesus*—But not before they had felt that proof of his sovereign power by which they had all been struck down to the earth. It is strange that, after this, they should dare to approach him; but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

12. *One of them which were with Jesus*—This was Peter. "Struck a servant of the high priest's; the servant's name was Malchus, and smote off his ear. Jesus touched and healed it." Here was another miracle, and striking proof of the Divinity of Christ. Peter did not cut the ear, merely, he cut it off. Now, to heal it, Jesus must either take up the ear and put it on again, or else create a new one; either of these was a miracle, which nothing less than unlimited power could produce.

13. *Cut off his right ear*—He probably designed to have cloven his skull in two, but God turned it aside, and only permitted the ear to be taken off; and this he

would not have suffered, but only that he might have the opportunity of giving them a most striking proof of his Divinity in working an astonishing miracle on the occasion.

14. *Put up again thy sword into the sheath*—Neither Christ nor his religion is to be defended by the secular arm. God is sufficiently able to support his ark: Uzzah need not stretch out his hand on the occasion. Even the shadow of public justice is not to be resisted by a private person, when coming from those in public authority. The cause of a Christian is the cause of God: Sufferings belong to one, and vengeance to the other. Let the cause, therefore, rest in his hands, who will do it ample justice.

15. *Shall perish with the sword*—The general meaning of this verse is: They who contend in battle are likely, on both sides, to become the sacrifices of their mutual animosities. But it is probably a prophetic declaration of the Jewish and Roman states. The Jews put our Lord to death under the sanction of the Romans; both took the sword against Christ, and both perished by it; the Jews by the sword of the Romans, and the Romans by that of the Goths, Vandals, &c. The event has verified the prediction; the Jewish government has been destroyed upwards of seven hundred years, and the Roman upwards of one thousand.

16. *More than twelve legions of angels?*—As if he had said, "Instead of you twelve, one of whom is a traitor, my Father can give me more than 'twelve legions of angels' to defend me." A legion, at different times, contained different numbers; four thousand two hundred, five thousand, and frequently six thousand men; and from this saying, taking the latter number, which is the common rate, may we not safely believe that the angels of God amount to more than seventy-two thousand?

17. *But how then*—Had I such a defence. "Shall the scriptures be fulfilled,"

which say, "that thus it must be?" that is, that I am to suffer and die for the sin of the world. Christ shows that they had no power against him but what he permitted; and that he willingly gave up himself into their hands.

18. *When I was daily with you*—Why come in this hostile manner? Every day, for four days past, ye might have met with me in the temple, whither I went to teach you the way of salvation.

19. *This is your hour, and the power of darkness*—That is, the time in which you are permitted to unrein your malice; which ye could not do before, because God did not permit you; and so perfectly are ye under his control, that neither you nor the prince of darkness can proceed a hair's breadth against me but through this permission: What a comfortable thought is it to the followers of Christ, that neither men nor demons can act against them but by the permission of their heavenly Father, and that he will not suffer any of those who trust in him to be tried above what they are able to bear, and will make the trial issue in their greater salvation, and in his glory!

20. *Left the linen cloth, and fled*—O what is man! How little is even his utmost sincerity to be depended on! Jesus is abandoned by all! Even zealous Peter and loving John are among the fugitives! Was ever master so served by his scholars? Was ever parent so treated by his children? Is there not as much zeal and love among them all as might make one martyr for God and truth? Alas! no. He had but twelve who professed inviolable attachment to him; one of these betrayed him, another denied him with oaths, and the rest run away and utterly abandon him to his implacable enemies! Are there not found among his disciples still, (1.) Persons who betray him and his cause? (2.) Persons who deny him and his people? (3.) Persons who abandon him, his people, his cause, and his truth? Reader, dost thou belong to any of these classes?

SECTION CCIX.—CHRIST TAKEN TO CAIAPHAS.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 57—68 ; MARK XIV. 53—65 ;
LUKE XXII. 54, 55, 63—65 ; JOHN XVIII. 12—16, 18—24.

THEN the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first ; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest : And with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Simon Peter followed Jesus afar off¹ unto the high priest's palace, and *so did* another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And the servants and officers had made a fire of coals in the midst of the hall, (for it was cold,) and were set down together ; and they warmed themselves : And Peter sat down among them, to see the end ;² and warmed himself at the fire. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world ;³ I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me ? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them : Behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus⁴ with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so ? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : But if well, why smitest thou me ? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness⁵ against Jesus, to put him to death ; but found none : Yea, though many false witnesses came,⁶ *and* bare false witness against him, *yet* found they none ; *for* their witness agreed not together. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, We heard this *fellow* say, I will destroy this temple⁷ that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing ?⁸ what *is it which* these witness against thee ? But Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, I adjure thee by the

living God,⁹ that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God the blessed? Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.¹⁰ And Jesus said, I am: Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? And they all answered, and condemned him, and said, He is guilty of death.¹¹ Then did they spit in his face,¹² and buffeted him; and the men that held Jesus mocked him, covered his face, and when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ,¹³ Who is he that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him: And the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.¹⁴

1. *Peter followed Jesus afar off*—Poor Peter! this is the beginning of his dreadful fall. His fear kept him from joining the company, and publicly acknowledging his Lord; and his affection obliged him to follow at a distance that he might see the end.

2. *And Peter sat down among them, to see the end*—When a man is weak in faith, and can as yet only follow Christ at a distance, he should avoid all dangerous places, and the company of those who are most likely to prove a snare to him. Had not Peter got to the high priest's palace, and sat down with the servants, he would not thus have denied his Lord and Master.

3. *I spake openly to the world*—The answer of our Lord, mentioned in this and the following verse, is such as became a person conscious of his own innocence, and confident in the righteousness of his cause. I have taught in the temple, in the synagogues, in all the principal cities, towns, and villages, and through all the country. I have had no secret school. You and your emissaries have watched me every where. No doctrine has ever proceeded from my lips, but what was agreeable to the righteousness of the law and the purity of God. My disciples, when they have taught, have taught in the same way, and had the same witnesses. Ask those who have attended our public ministrations, and hear whether they can prove that I or my disciples have preached any false doctrines, have ever troubled society, or disturbed the state. Attend to the ordinary course of justice, call

witnesses, let them make their depositions, and then proceed to judge according to the evidence brought before you.

4. *One of the officers struck Jesus*—This was an outrage to all justice; for a prisoner, before he is condemned, is ever considered to be under the especial protection of justice; nor has any one a right to touch him, but according to the direction of the law. But it has been observed before, that, if justice had been done to Christ, he could neither have suffered nor died.

5. *All the council sought false witness*—What a prostitution of justice! They first resolve to ruin him, and then seek the proper means of effecting it: They declare him criminal, and after that do all they can to fix some crime upon him, that they may appear to have some shadow of justice on their side when they put him to death.

6. *Though many false witnesses came*—I shall give that which I believe to be the genuine sense of the evangelist: "Then the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but they found it not, though many false witnesses came up. At last two false witnesses came up, saying, This man said," &c. It is the property of falsity ever to be inconsistent, and to contradict itself; therefore they could not find two consistent testimonies, without which the Jewish law did not permit any person to be put to death. However, the hand of God was in this business: For the credit of Jesus, and the honour of the Christian

religion, he would not permit him to be condemned on a false accusation; and, therefore, at last they are obliged to change their ground, and, to the eternal confusion of the unrighteous council, he is condemned on the very evidence of his own innocence, purity, and truth!

7. *I will destroy this temple*—(1.) These words were not fairly quoted. Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it again in three days." (2.) The innuendo which they produce, applying these words to a pretended design to destroy the temple at Jerusalem, was utterly unfair; for these words he spoke of the temple of his body. It is very easy, by means of a few small alterations, to render the most holy things and innocent persons odious to the world, and even to take away the life of the innocent.

8. *Answerest thou nothing?*—The accusation was so completely frivolous that it merited no notice; besides, Jesus knew that they were determined to put him to death, and that his hour was come; and that therefore remonstrance or defence would be of no use. He had often before borne sufficient testimony to the truth.

9. *I adjure thee by the living God*—I put thee to thy oath. To this solemn adjuration Christ immediately replies, because he is now called on, in the name of God, to bear another testimony to the truth. The authority of God in the most worthless magistrate should be properly respected. However necessary our Lord saw it to be silent, when the accusations were frivolous, and the evidence contradictory, he felt no disposition to continue this silence, when

questioned concerning a truth, for which he came into the world to shed his blood.

10. *Thou hast said*—That is, I am the Christ, the promised Messiah; and you and this whole nation shall shortly have the fullest proof of it: For "hereafter," in a few years, "ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power," fully invested with absolute dominion, "and coming in the clouds of heaven," to execute judgment upon this wicked race.

11. *He is guilty of death*—All the forms of justice are here violated. The judge becomes a party and accuser, and proceeds to the verdict without examining whether all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the innumerable miracles which he wrought, did not justify him. Examination and proof are the ruin of all calumnies, and of the authors of them, and therefore they take care to keep off from these two things.

12. *Then did they spit in his face*—This was done as a mark of the most profound contempt.

13. *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ*—Their conduct toward him now was expressly prophesied of, by a man whose divine mission they did not pretend to deny. It appears that before they buffeted him, they bound up his eyes.

14. *Strike him with the palms of their hands*—Thus they offered him indignity in all its various and vexatious forms. Insults of this kind are never forgiven by the world. Jesus not only takes no revenge, though it be completely in his power, but bears all with meekness, without even one word of reply.

SECTION CCX.—PETER'S DENIAL.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVI. 69—75; MARK XIV. 66—72;
LUKE XXII. 56—62; JOHN XVIII. 17, 18, 25—27.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest, the damsel that kept the door. And when she saw Peter as he sat by the fire, warming himself, she earnestly looked upon him, and said, Art thou not also *one* of this man's disciples? Thou also wast with Jesus¹ of Galilee. But he denied before *them* all,² saying, *Woman,*

I am not, I know him not, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And when he was gone out into the porch, *this* maid saw him again, and another, and said unto them that were there, *This fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: And they warmed themselves: And Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? And again he denied with an oath,³ I am not, I do not know the man. And after a while, about the space of one hour after, one of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth *this fellow* was also with him: For he is a Galilæan. And *he* said to Peter, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? And they that stood by said unto Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them; for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech bewrayeth thee. Peter then denied again, and began to curse and to swear,⁴ and said, Man, I know not what thou sayest; I know not this man of whom ye speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the second time the cock crew.⁵ And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord,⁶ how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he went out,⁷ and wept bitterly.⁸

1. *Thou also wast with Jesus*—What a noble opportunity had Peter now to show his zeal for the insulted cause of truth, and his attachment to his Master! But, alas, he is shorn of his strength! Constables and maid-servants are no company for an apostle, except when he is delivering to them the message of salvation. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Had Peter been in better company, he would not have had so foul a fall.

"Throw a blazing firebrand into snow or rain, and its brightness and heat will be quickly extinguished: So, let the liveliest Christian plunge himself into sinful company, and he will soon find the warmth of his zeal abated, and the tenderness of his conscience injured."—BOLTON.

2. *But he denied before them all*—So the evil principle gains ground. Before, he "followed at a distance," now he "denies;" this is the second gradation in his fall.

3. *And again he denied with an oath*—

This is a third gradation of his iniquity. He has told a lie, and he swears to support it. A liar has always some suspicion that his testimony is not credited; for he is conscious of his own falsity, and is therefore naturally led to support his assertions by oaths.

4. *Began to curse and to swear, &c.*—This makes the fourth and final gradation in the climax of Peter's fall. From these awful beginnings it is not unfair to conclude, that Peter might have gone almost as far as Judas himself, had not the traitorous business been effected before. Yet all this evil sprung simply from the fear of man. How many denials of Christ and his truth have sprung since from the same cause!

5. *The cock crew*—This animal becomes, in the hand of God, the instrument of awakening the fallen apostle, at last, to a sense of his fall, danger, and duty. When abandoned of God, the smallest thing may become the occasion of a fall; and, when

in the hand of God, the smallest matter may become the instrument of our restoration. Let us never think lightly of what are termed "little sins;" the smallest one has the seed of eternal ruin in it. Let us never think contemptibly of the feeblest means of grace; each may have the seed of eternal salvation in it. Let us ever remember, that the great apostle Peter fell through fear of a servant-maid, and rose through the crowing of a cock.

6. *Peter remembered the word of the Lord*—St. Luke says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." So it appears he was nigh to our Lord, either at the time when the cock crew, or shortly after. The delicacy of this reproof was great; he must be reprov'd and alarmed, otherwise he will proceed yet further in his iniquity; Christ is in bonds, and cannot go and speak to him; if he call aloud, the disciple is discovered, and falls a victim to Jewish malice and Roman jealousy; he therefore does the whole by a look. In the hand of Omnipotence every thing is easy, and he can save by a few, as well as by many.

7. *He went out*—He left the place where he had sinned, and the company which had been the occasion of his transgression.

8. *And wept bitterly*—Felt bitter anguish of soul, which evinced itself by the tears of contrition which flowed plentifully from his eyes. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall! Where the mighty have been

slain, what shall support the feeble? Only the grace of the almighty God.

This transaction is recorded by the inspired penmen, (1.) That all may watch unto prayer, and shun the occasions of sin. (2.) That if a man be unhappily overtaken in a fault, he may not despair, but cast himself immediately with a contrite heart on the infinite tenderness and compassion of God.

"The time when Peter denied Christ makes his crime great indeed. The time of the Lord's looking upon him illuminates his looks. At the very time when Jesus was giving the tenderest marks of his love, Peter discovered the blackest ingratitude to him. While Jesus redeemed Peter, Peter denied Jesus! While Jesus yielded to the bloody death of the cross for Peter, Peter refused to confess him! But, Jesus looks at him. My brethren, what do these looks say? How eloquent are those eyes! Never was a discourse so effectual; never did an orator express himself with so much force. It is the Man of Griefs complaining of a new burden, while he is ready to sink under what he already bears; it is the beneficent Redeemer of mankind, pitying a soul ready to be lost; it is the Apostle of our profession preaching in chains;—in fine, it is the Sovereign of the hearts of men, the almighty God of love, curbing the efforts of the devil, and taking his conquest away."—SAURIN.

SECTION CCXI.—CHRIST TAKEN TO PILATE ; JUDAS HANGS HIMSELF.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 1—10; MARK XV. 1; LUKE XXII. 66—71;
XXIII. 1; JOHN XVIII. 28; ACTS 1. 18.

AND as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask *you*, ye will not answer me, nor let *me* go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. And straightway in the morning all

the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, against Jesus to put him to death: ¹ And the whole multitude of them arose, and when they had bound Jesus, they led *him* away from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate ² the governor: And it was early. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented ³ himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, *What is that* to us? ⁴ see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁵ Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, ⁶ unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

1. *To put him to death*—They had already determined his death, and pronounced the sentence of death on him. And now they assemble under the pretence of reconsidering the evidence, and deliberating on it, to give the greater appearance of justice to their conduct. They wished to make it appear, that "they had taken ample time to consider of it, and, from the fullest conviction, by the most satisfactory and conclusive evidence, they had now delivered him into the hands of the Romans, to meet that death to which they had adjudged him."

2. *And delivered him to Pontius Pilate*—The sanhedrim had the power of life and death in their own hands in every thing that concerned religion; but as they had not evidence to put Christ to death because of false doctrine, they wished to give countenance to their conduct by bringing in the civil power, and therefore they delivered him up to Pilate as one who aspired to regal dignities, and whom he must put to death, if he professed to be Cæsar's friend.

3. *Judas, when he saw that he was condemned, repented*—There is much of the

wisdom and goodness of God to be seen in this part of Judas's conduct. Had our Lord been condemned to death on the evidence of one of his own disciples, it would have furnished infidels with a strong argument against Christ and the Christian religion. "One of his own disciples, knowing the whole imposture, declared it to the Jewish rulers; in consequence of which he was put to death as an impostor and deceiver." But the traitor, being stung with remorse, came and acknowledged his crime, and solemnly declared the innocence of his Master, threw back the money which they gave him to induce him to do this villanous act; and, to establish the evidence which he now gave against them and himself, in behalf of the innocence of Christ, hanged himself, or died through excessive grief and contrition. Thus the character of Christ was rescued from all reproach; infidelity deprived of the power to cry, "Imposture!" and the Jewish rulers overwhelmed with eternal infamy. If it should ever be said, "One who knew him best delivered him up as an impostor;" to this it may be immediately answered.

"The same person, struck with remorse, came and declared his own guilt, and Christ's innocence; accused and convicted the Jewish rulers, in the open council, of having hired him to do this iniquitous action, threw them back the bribe they had given him, and then hanged himself through distress and despair, concluding his iniquity in this business was too great to be forgiven." Let him who chooses, after this plenary evidence to the innocence of Christ, continue the objection, and cry out, "Imposture!" take heed that he go not and do likewise. Caiaphas, Pilate, and Judas have done so already; and I have known several, who have called Christ an impostor, who have cut their own throats, shot, drowned, or hanged themselves. God is a jealous God, and highly resents every thing that is done and said against that eternal truth that came to man through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, there is one class of deists, namely, those who are vicious in their lives, and virulent in their opposition to Christianity, who generally bring themselves to an untimely end.

4. *What is that to us?*—What is it? A great deal. You should immediately go and reverse the sentence you have pronounced, and liberate the innocent person. But this would have been justice, and that would have been a stranger at their tribunal.

5. *To bury strangers in*—"The strangers," probably meaning, as some learned men conjecture, the Jewish strangers who

might have come to Jerusalem, either to worship, or on some other business, and died there during their stay. See here, the very money for which the blessed Jesus was sold becomes subservient to the purpose of mercy and kindness! The bodies of strangers have a place of rest in the field purchased by the price at which his life was valued, and the souls of strangers and foreigners have a place of rest and refuge in his blood which was shed as a ransom-price for the salvation of the whole world.

6. *The field of blood*—In vain do the wicked attempt to conceal themselves; God makes them instrumental in discovering their own wickedness. Judas, by returning the money, and the priests, by laying it out, raise to themselves an eternal monument—the one of his treachery, the others of their perfidiousness, and both of the innocence of Jesus Christ. As long as the Jewish polity continued, it might be said, "This is the field that was bought from the potter with the money which Judas got from the high priests for betraying his Master; which he, in deep compunction of spirit, brought back to them, and they bought this ground for a burial-place for strangers: For, as it was the price of the blood of an innocent man, they did not think proper to let it rest in the treasury of the temple where the traitor had thrown it, who afterwards, in despair, went and hanged himself." What a standing proof must this have been of the innocence of Christ, and of their perfidy!

SECTION CCXII.—CHRIST ACCUSED BEFORE PILATE.

A. D. 29.

JOHN XVIII. 28—40.

THEN led they Jesus from Caiaphas¹ unto the hall of judgment: And it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out² unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor,³ we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto

him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death :⁴ That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself,⁵ or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?⁶ Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world :⁷ If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: But now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest⁸ that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?⁹ And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault¹⁰ *at all*. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: Will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

1. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas*—St. John has omitted all that passed in the house of Caiaphas, the accusations brought against Christ, the false witnesses, the insults which he received in the house of the high priest, and the assembling of the grand council, or sanhedrim. These he found amply detailed by the other three evangelists; and for this reason it appears that he omitted them. John's is properly a supplementary Gospel.

2. *Pilate then went out*—This was an act of condescension; but, as the Romans had confirmed to the Jews the free use of all their rites and ceremonies, the governor could not do less than comply with them in this matter. He went out to them, that they might not be obliged to come into the hall, and thus run the risk of being defiled.

3. *If he were not a malefactor*—So they did not wish to make Pilate the judge, but the executor of the sentence which they had already illegally passed.

4. *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death*—They might have judged Jesus according to their law, as Pilate

bade them do; but they could only excommunicate or scourge him. They might have voted him worthy of death; but they could not put him to death, if any thing of a secular nature were charged against him.

5. *Sayest thou this thing of thyself?*—That is, "Is it because my enemies thus accuse me, or because thou hast any suspicion of me, that thou askest this question?"

6. *Am I a Jew?*—That is, "I am not a Jew, and cannot judge whether thou art what is called the Christ, the King of the Jews. It is thy own countrymen, and their spiritual rulers, who delivered thee up to me with the above accusation."

7. *My kingdom is not of this world*—It is purely spiritual and divine. If it had been of a secular nature, then my servants would have contended, they would have opposed force with force, as the kingdoms of this world do in their wars; but, as my kingdom is not of this world, therefore no resistance has been made.

8. *Thou sayest*—A common form of expression for "Yes, it is so." I was born

into the world, that I might set up and maintain a spiritual government; but this government is established in and by truth. All that love truth hear my voice, and attend to the spiritual doctrines I preach. It is by truth alone that I influence the minds, and govern the manners, of my subjects.

9. *What is truth?*—Among the sages of that time there were many opinions concerning truth; and some had even supposed that it was a thing utterly out of the reach of men. Pilate perhaps might have asked the question in a mocking way; and his not staying to get an answer, indicated that he either despaired of getting a satisfactory one, or that he was indifferent about it. This is the case with thousands: They appear desirous of knowing the truth, but have not patience to wait in a proper way to receive an answer to their question.

10. *I find in him no fault*—Having asked the above question, and being convinced of our Lord's innocence, he went onto the Jews to testify his conviction, and to deliver him, if possible, out of their hands. It is not easy to give the character of Pilate. From the manner of his conduct, we scarcely can tell when he is in jest or in earnest. He appears to have been fully convinced of the innocence

of Christ; and that the Jews, through envy and malice, desired his destruction. On this ground he should have released him; but he was afraid to offend the Jews. He knew they were an uneasy, factious, and seditious people; and he was afraid to irritate them. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum!* was no motto of his. For fear of the clamours of this bad people, he permitted all the forms and requisitions of justice to be outraged, and abandoned the most innocent Jesus to their rage and malice. In this case he knew what was truth, but did not follow its dictates; and he as hastily abandoned the Author of it, as he did the question he had asked concerning it. Pilate, it is true, was disposed to pity; the Jews were full of malice and cruelty. They both, however, joined in the murder of our Lord. The most that we can say for Pilate is, that he was disposed to justice, but was not inclined to hazard his comfort or safety in doing it. He was an easy, pliable man, who had no objection to do a right thing if it should cost him no trouble; but he felt no disposition to make any sacrifice, even in behalf of innocence, righteousness, and truth. In all the business, Pilate showed that he was not a good man; and the Jews proved that they were of their father, the devil.

SECTION CCXIII.—CHRIST SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XIX. 1—14.

THEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*.¹ And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man!² When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: For I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.³

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid ;⁴ and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ?⁵ But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above : Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.⁶ And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him : But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour : And he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King !

1. *Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him*—As our Lord was scourged by order of Pilate, it is probable he was scourged in the Roman manner, which was much more severe than that of the Jews. The latter never gave more than thirty-nine blows ; for the law had absolutely forbidden a man to be abused, or his flesh cut, in this chastisement.

2. *Behold the man!*—The man who, according to you, affects the government, and threatens to take away the empire from the Romans ; behold the man whom ye have brought unto me as an enemy to Cæsar, and as a sower of the seeds of sedition in the land ! In him I find no guilt ; and from him ye have no occasion to fear any evil.

3. *The Son of God*—It is certain that the Jews understood this in a very peculiar sense. When Christ called himself "the Son of God," they understood it to imply positive equality to the Supreme Being ; and, if they were wrong, our Lord never attempted to correct them.

4. *He was the more afraid*—While Jesus was accused only as a disturber of the peace of the nation, (which accusation Pilate knew to be false,) he knew he could deliver him, because the judgment in that case belonged to himself ; but when the Jews brought a charge against him of the most capital nature, from their own laws, he then saw that he had every thing to fear, if he did not deliver Jesus to their will.

The sanhedrim must not be offended ; the populace must not be irritated : From the former a complaint might be sent against him to Cæsar ; the latter might revolt, or proceed to some acts of violence, the end of which could not be foreseen. Pilate was certainly to be pitied ; he saw what was right, and he wished to do it ; but he had not sufficient firmness of mind ; he did not attend to that important maxim, " Let justice be done, though the heavens should be dissolved." He had a vile people to govern, and it was not an easy matter to keep them quiet. Some suppose that Pilate's fear arose from hearing that Jesus had said he was " the Son of God ;" because Pilate, who was a polytheist, believed that it was possible for the offspring of the gods to visit mortals ; and he was afraid to condemn Jesus, for fear of offending some of the supreme deities. Perhaps the question in the succeeding verse refers to this.

5. *Whence art thou ?*—This certainly does not mean, " From what country art thou ?" for Pilate knew this well enough ; but it appears he made this inquiry to know who were the parents of Christ, what were his pretensions, and whether he really were a demi-god, such as the Heathens believed in. To this question we find our Lord gave no answer. He had already told him, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he came to erect a spiritual kingdom, not a temporal one : This answer he deemed sufficient ; and he did not choose to satisfy

a criminal curiosity, nor to enter then into any debate concerning the absurdity of the heathen worship.

6. *Hath the greater sin*—It is a sin in thee to condemn me, while thou art convinced in thy conscience that I am innocent; but the Jews, who delivered me to thee, and Judas, who delivered me to the Jews, have the greater crime to answer for. Thy ignorance, in some measure, excuses thee; but the rage and malice of the Jews put them, at present, out of the reach of mercy.

“Let us now, by a lively act of faith, bring forth the blessed Jesus to our imagination, as Pilate brought him forth to the people; let us, with affectionate sympathy, survey the indignities which were offered

him, when he ‘gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them who plucked off the hair; and hid not his face from shame and spitting.’ Behold the Man, wearing his purple robe and thorny crown, and bearing the reed which smote him, in his right hand for a sceptre. Behold, not merely the Man, but the Son of God, thus vilely degraded, thus infamously abused. Shall we, as it were, increase his sufferings? and, while we condemn the fury and cruelty of the Jews, shall we crucify him to ourselves afresh, and put him to an open shame? or shall we overlook him with slight and contempt, and hide our faces from him, who, for our sakes, thus exposed his own?”—DODDRIDGE.

SECTION CCXIV.—ACCUSATIONS BROUGHT AGAINST CHRIST.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 11—14; MARK XV. 2—5;
LUKE XXIII. 2—16; JOHN XIX. 14, 15.

AND they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Jesus stood before the governor: And the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? ¹ Jesus answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. ² And the chief priests and elders accused him of many things: But he answered nothing. ³ And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered him to never a word; insomuch that Pilate the governor marvelled greatly. ⁴ Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: For he was desirous to see him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused

him.⁵ And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked *him*, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends⁶ together: For before they were at enmity between themselves. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: And, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things wherof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: For I sent you to him;⁷ and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

1. *Art thou the King of the Jews?*—“This question could not have arisen from any thing which occurred at the trial before the sanhedrim, and was probably suggested to Pilate by the chief priests, whose object it was to implicate Jesus in a charge of seditious intentions, so that the Roman governor might both the more readily consent to his death, and take his execution into his own hands, and, according to the Roman manner, crucify him.”

2. *Thou sayest it*—“This was a form of affirmation. Our Lord, without hesitation, declared that he was the King of the Jews; at the same time, he takes care that Pilate should not proceed in ignorance upon the malicious suggestions of the priests, that he had professed to be the king of the Jews politically, by explaining his meaning, ‘My kingdom is not of this world;’ it is not a civil, but a spiritual, reign; and this was done that Pilate might know that Cæsar had nothing to fear from him.”—R. WATSON.

3. *He answered nothing*—An answer to such accusations was not necessary: They sufficiently confuted themselves.

4. *Pilate the governor marvelled greatly*—Silence under calumny manifests the utmost magnanimity. The chief priests did not admire this, because it confounded them; but Pilate, who had no interest to

serve by it, was deeply affected. This very silence was predicted, Isaiah liii. 7.

5. *The chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him*—Corrupt priests and teachers are generally the most implacable enemies of Christ and his truth. Evil passions betray those who are slaves to them. An affected moderation would have rendered these accusers less suspected, their accusations more probable, and the envy less visible, than this vehemence: But envy seldom or never consults prudence; and God permits this to be so, for the honour of truth and innocence.

6. *Pilate and Herod were made friends*—Wicked men cannot love one another: This belongs to the disciples of Christ. But when Christ, his truth, or his followers are to be persecuted for this purpose, the wicked unite their counsels and their influence.

7. *No, nor yet Herod: For I sent you to him*—That is, to see whether he could find that Christ had ever attempted to raise any disaffection or sedition among the Galileans, among whom he had spent the principal part of his life; and yet Herod has not been able to find out any evil in his conduct. Your own accusations I have fully weighed, and find them, to the last degree, frivolous.

SECTION CCXV.—BARABBAS RELEASED, AND
JESUS DELIVERED UP.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 15—26; MARK XV. 6—15.
LUKE XXIII. 17—25; JOHN XIX. 16.

Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them, (for of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.¹ When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: For I have suffered many things this day in a dream² because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas,³ and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas.⁴ Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, answered and said again to them, What shall I do then with Jesus⁵ which is called Christ? *him* whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they all cried out again, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And Pilate said unto them, the third time, Why, what evil hath he done?⁶ I have found no cause of death in him:⁷ I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they cried out the more⁸ exceedingly, they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands⁹ before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: See ye *to it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.¹⁰ And *so* Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; and took Jesus and scourged him. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required, and he delivered Jesus to their will to be crucified.

1. *For envy*—"Through malice." Then it was his business, as an upright judge, to have dispersed this mob, and immediately released Jesus. Seeing malice is capable of putting even Christ himself to death, how careful should we be not to let the least spark of it harbour in our breast! Let it be remembered, that malice as often originates from envy as it does from anger.

2. *I have suffered many things this day in a dream*—There is no doubt that God had appeared unto this woman, testifying the innocence of Christ, and showing the evils which should pursue Pilate if this innocent blood should be shed by his authority.

"The occurrence of the dream; the powerful manner in which it affected her; the message which she sent to her husband during the day, after the proceedings against Jesus had become public, when seated on the tribunal; and the testimony given by a Gentle woman of rank, from the impression of a singular dream, in favour of the righteous character of Christ; must all be referred to a higher than a natural cause, or to mere accident. It was the design of God to multiply testimonies to the holy and blameless character of our Lord, that it might be the more strongly marked in all future ages, that he died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Judas, by his confession; the false witnesses, by their disagreement; the judges, by their violence, manifest injustice, and the vagueness of their charges; Pilate's wife, by her message to her lord; and Pilate himself,—all proclaimed the perfect innocence of the victim, who was nevertheless yielded up to the clamours of his persecutors. How strange are these events! and yet how perfectly they accord with the true character and design of our Saviour's passion and death!"

—R. WATSON.

3. *Ask Barabbas*—Who had raised an insurrection and committed murder; and to destroy Jesus, whose voice was never heard in their streets, and who had, during the space of three years and a half, gone about unweariedly, from village to village, instructing the ignorant, healing the diseased, and raising the dead.

4. *Release unto us Barabbas*—What a fickle crowd! A little before they all hailed

him as the Son of David, and acknowledged him as a gift from God; now they prefer a murderer to him! But this, it appears, they did at the instigation of the chief priests. We see here how dangerous wicked priests are in the church of Christ; when pastors are corrupt, they are capable of inducing their flock to prefer Barabbas to Jesus, the world to God, and the pleasures of sense to the salvation of their souls. The invidious epithet which a certain statesman gave to the people at large was, in its utmost latitude, applicable to these Jews,—they were "a swinish multitude."

5. *What shall I do then with Jesus?*—Showing, hereby, that it was his wish to release him.

6. *What evil hath he done?*—Pilate plainly saw, that there was nothing laid to his charge for which, consistently with the Roman laws, he could condemn him.

7. *I have found no cause of death in him*—"I find no crime worthy of death in him." There is nothing proved against him that can at all justify me in putting him to death. So here our blessed Lord was in the most formal manner justified by his judge. Now, as this decision was publicly known, and perhaps registered, it is evident that Christ died as an innocent person, and not as a malefactor. On the fullest conviction of his innocence, his judge pronounced him guiltless, after having patiently heard every thing that the inventive malice of these wicked men could allege against him; and, when he wished to dismiss him, a violent mob took and murdered him.

8. *They cried out the more*—What strange fury and injustice! They could not answer Pilate's question, "What evil hath he done?" He had done none; and they knew he had done none; but they are determined on his death.

9. *Pilate took water, and washed his hands*—Thus signifying his innocence. It was a custom among the Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, to wash the hands in token of innocence, and to show that they were pure from any imputed guilt. As Pilate knew Christ was innocent, he should have prevented his death; he had the armed force at his command, and should have dispersed this infamous mob. Had he been charged with countenancing a seditious

person, he could have easily cleared himself, had the matter been brought before the emperor. He, therefore, was inexcusable.

10. *His blood be on us, and on our children*—If this man be innocent, and we put him to death as a guilty person, may the punishment due to such a crime be visited upon us, and upon our children after us! What a dreadful imprecation! and how literally fulfilled! The preceding notes will show how they fell victims to their own

imprecation, being visited with a series of calamities unexampled in the history of the world. They were visited with the same kind of punishment; for the Romans crucified them in such numbers when Jerusalem was taken, that there was found a deficiency of crosses for the condemned, and of places for the crosses. Their children or descendants have had the same curse entailed upon them, and continue to this day a proof of the innocence of Christ, the truth of his religion, and of the justice of God.

SECTION CCXVI.—CHRIST LED AWAY TO BE CRUCIFIED.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 27—34; MARK XV. 16—23;
LUKE XXIII. 26—34; JOHN XIX. 16—18.

THEN the soldiers of the governor took Jesus, and led him away into the common hall, called Prætorium; and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns,¹ they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him,² and smote him with their hands, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And the soldiers, after they had mocked him, took off the purple from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him out to crucify him. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus; on him they laid the cross, and compelled him to bear *it* after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me,³ but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come unto the place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: And they gave him to drink

wine mingled with myrrh : But he received *it* not : And when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink. There they crucified him, and the two malefactors with him ; one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.⁴

1. *A crown of thorns*—It does not appear that this crown was intended to be an instrument of punishment or torture to his head, but rather to render him ridiculous ; for which cause also they put a reed in his hand, by way of sceptre, and bowed their knees, pretending to do him homage. “ Let the crown of thorns make those Christians blush who throw away so much time, pains, and money, in beautifying and adorning a sinful head. Let the world do what it will to render the royalty and mysteries of Christ contemptible ; it is my glory to serve a King thus debased ; my salvation, to adore that which the world despises ; and my redemption to go unto God through the merits of Him who was crowned with thorns.”

2. *And they spit upon him*—“ Let us pay our adoration and humble ourselves in silence at the sight of a spectacle which faith alone renders credible, and which our senses would hardly endure. Jesus Christ, in this condition, preaches to the kings of the earth this truth,—that their sceptres are but reeds, with which themselves shall be smitten, bruised, and crushed at his tribunal, if they do not use them here to the advancement of his kingdom.”

“ When violent and cruel hands scourged his sacred person, and pressed on his temples the crown of thorns, it was but the continuation of the scene of blood. When his hands and his feet were nailed to the dreadful tree ; when the soldier’s spear pierced that guileless and benevolent heart ; it was but the scene of blood carried to its astonishing and dread consummation ! But this blood was not shed in vain. It was the redemption-price for a forfeited world ; it was the true fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness ; it was the overthrow of the devil, the astonishment of angels, and the life of man.”—BROMLEY.

3. *Weep not for me*—Many pious persons have been greatly distressed in their minds, because they could not weep on

reading or hearing of the sufferings of Christ. For the relief of all such, let it be for ever known, that no human spirit can possibly take any part in the passion of the Messiah. His sufferings were such as only God manifested in the flesh could bear ; and, as they were all of an expiatory nature, no man can taste of or share in them. Besides, the sufferings of Christ are not a subject of sorrow to any man ; but, on the contrary, of eternal rejoicing to the whole of a lost world. Some have even prayed to participate in the sufferings of Christ.

4. *They know not what they do*—If ignorance do not excuse a crime, it at least diminishes the atrocity of it. However, these persons well knew that they were crucifying an innocent man ; but they did not know that, by this act of theirs, they were bringing down on themselves and on their country the heaviest judgments of God. In the prayer, “ Father, forgive them !” that word of prophecy was fulfilled, “ He made intercession for the transgressors.”

“ We Christians cannot, in deed, be guilty of the very same offence in crucifying the Lord of life and glory ; but it behoves us to consider whether we may not be guilty in the same kind, and by our sins and iniquities ‘ crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame ;’ and, therefore, whether, being like them in their crime, we may not also resemble them in their punishment. They rejected the Messiah, and we, indeed, have received him ; but have our lives been at all agreeable to our holy profession ? or rather, as we have had opportunities of knowing our Lord more, have we not obeyed him less, than other Christians ? And have not some of us even trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace ? ”—BISHOP NEWTON.

SECTION CCXVII.—CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 35—44; MARK XV. 24—32;
LUKE XXIII. 35—43; JOHN XIX. 19—24.

AND Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: For the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: And it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat: Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots¹ for it, whose it shall be. And they cast lots: That the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did; and sitting down they watched him² there. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.³ And *they* set up over his head his accusation⁴ written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves;⁵ the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by reviled him, and railed on him, wagging their heads,⁶ and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest⁷ the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself, if thou be the Son of God, and come down from the cross. And the people stood beholding. Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him* said among themselves with the scribes and elders, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be Christ, the King of Israel, the chosen of God, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: For he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth, and reviled him. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering

rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me⁸ when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.⁹

1. *Let us not rend it, but cast lots*—These were the Roman soldiers, who had crucified him; and it appears from this circumstance, that, in those ancient times, the spoils of the criminal were claimed by the executioners, as they are to the present day. It appears that they divided a part, and cast lots for the rest, namely, for his seamless coat.

2. *They watched him*—To prevent his disciples or relatives from taking away the body, or affording any relief to the sufferer.

3. *And they crucified him*—Crucifixion properly means the act of nailing or tying to a cross. The cross was made of two beams, either crossing at the top at right angles, like a T, or in the middle of their length like an X. There was, besides, a piece on the centre of the transverse beam, to which the accusation or statement of the crime of the culprit was attached, and a piece of wood, which projected from the middle, on which the person sat, as on a sort of saddle; and by which the whole body was supported. The cross on which our Lord suffered was of the former kind; being thus represented in all old monuments, coins, and crosses. It was probably the Romans who introduced it among the Jews. Before they became subject to the Romans, they used hanging or gibbeting, but not the cross. This punishment was the most dreadful of all others, both for the shame and pain of it; and so scandalous, that it was inflicted as the last mark of detestation upon the vilest of people. It was the punishment of robbers and murderers, provided they were slaves; but if they were free, it was thought too infamous a punishment for such, let their crimes be what they might.

The body of the criminal was fastened to the upright beam, by nailing or tying the feet to it, and on the transverse piece by nailing, and sometimes tying, the hands to it. As the hands and feet are the grand instruments of motion, they are provided

with a greater quantity of nerves; and the nerves in those places, especially the hands, are peculiarly sensible. Now, as the nerves are the instruments of all sensation or feeling, wounds in the parts where they abound must be peculiarly painful; especially when inflicted with such rude instruments as large nails, forced through the places by the violence of a hammer; thus tearing asunder the nervous fibrillæ, delicate tendons, and small bones of those parts. This punishment will appear dreadful enough, when it is considered that the person was permitted to hang, the whole weight of his body being borne up by his nailed hands and the projecting piece which passed between the thighs, till he perished through agony and lack of food. Some, we are informed, have lived three whole days in this state. It is true that, in some cases, there was a kind of mercy shown to the sufferer, which will appear sufficiently horrid, when it is known that it consisted in breaking the bones of their legs and thighs to pieces with a large hammer, in order to put them the sooner out of pain. Such a *coup de grace* as this could only spring from those tender mercies of the wicked which God represents as cruelty itself. Some were permitted to hang on the cross till eaten up by birds of prey, which often began to tear them before life was extinct.

4. *His accusation*—It was a common custom to affix a label to the cross, giving a statement of the crime for which the person suffered. This is still the case in China, when a person is crucified. Sometimes a person was employed to carry this before the criminal, while going to the place of punishment.

5. *Two thieves*—“Robbers,” or cut-throats: Men who had committed robbery and murder; for it does not appear that persons were crucified for robbery only. Thus was our Lord numbered (his name enrolled, placed, as it were, in the death-warrant) with transgressors; and the

Jews placed him between these two, perhaps to intimate that he was the worst felon of the three.

6. *Wagging their heads*—In token of contempt.

7. *Thou that destroyest*—Who didst pretend that thou couldst have destroyed the temple, and built it up again in three days. This malicious torturing of our Lord's words has been noticed before. Cruelty is obliged to take refuge in lies, in order to vindicate its infamous proceedings.

A High Priest, who designs to destroy the temple of God; a Saviour, who saves not himself; and the Son of God crucified!—these are the contradictions which give offence to Jews and libertines. But a High Priest, who dispels the types and shadows, only that he may disclose the substance, of religion, and become the Minister of a heavenly sanctuary; a Saviour, who dies only to be the victim of salvation; and the Son of God, who confines his power within the bounds of the cross to establish the righteousness of faith:—This is what a Christian adores; this is the foundation of his hope, and the fountain of his present comfort and final blessedness.

8. *Lord, remember me, &c.*—It is worthy of remark, that this man appears to have been the first who believed in the intercession of Christ.

“What a surprising degree was here of repentance, faith, and other graces! And what abundance of good works, in his public confession of sin, reproof of his fellow-criminal, his honourable testimony of Christ, and profession of faith in him, while he was in so disgraceful circumstances, as were stumbling even to his disciples! This shows the power of divine grace. But it encourages none to put off their repentance to the last hour; since, as far as appears, this was the first time this criminal had an opportunity of knowing any thing of Christ. And his conversion was designed to put a peculiar glory on our Saviour, in his lowest estate, while his enemies derided him, and his own disciples either denied or forsook him.”—WESLEY.

9. *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*—Paradise was, in the beginning, the habitation of man in his state of innocence, in which he enjoyed that presence of his Maker which constituted his supreme happiness. Our Lord's words intimate that this penitent should be immediately taken to the abode of the spirits of the just, where he should enjoy the presence and approbation of the Most High. This saying of our Lord is justly considered as a strong proof of the immateriality of the soul.

SECTION CCXVIII.—THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

A. D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 45—54; MARK XV. 38—39;
LUKE XXIII. 44—48; JOHN XIX. 25—30.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,¹ he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! ² Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over all the land ³ unto the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent ⁴ in the midst. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ⁵ And some of them that stood by, when they heard *that*,

said, Behold, this *man* calleth for Elias. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.⁶ And when Jesus had cried again with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: And having said thus, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.⁷ And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain in the midst, from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened;⁸ and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection,⁹ and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.¹⁰ Now when the centurion, which stood over against him, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, they feared greatly; and the centurion glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man: Truly this man was the Son of God. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

1. *The disciple standing by whom he loved*—John, the writer of the Gospel.

2. *Woman, behold thy son!*—This is a remarkable expression, and has been much misunderstood. It conveys no idea of disrespect, nor of unconcern, as has been commonly supposed. In the way of compellation, "man!" and "woman!" were titles of as much respect among the Hebrews, as "sir!" and "madam!" are among us. But why does not Jesus call her "mother?" Probably because he wished to spare her feelings; he would not mention a name, the very sound of which must have wrung her heart with additional sorrow. On this account he says, "Behold thy son!" this was the language of pure natural affection: "Consider this crucified man no longer at present as any relative of thine; but take that disciple whom my power shall preserve from evil for thy son; and, while he considers thee as his mother, account him for thy child." It is probable that it was because the keeping of the blessed virgin was entrusted to him, that he was the only disciple of our Lord who died

a natural death, God having preserved him for the sake of the person whom he gave him in charge. Many children are not only preserved alive, but abundantly prospered in temporal things, for the sake of the desolate parents whom God has cast upon their care. It is very likely that Joseph was dead previously to this; and that this was the reason why the desolate virgin is committed to the care of the beloved disciple.

3. *There was darkness over all the land*—It is evident that the evangelists speak of things that happened in Judea, the place of their residence. It is plain enough there was a darkness in Jerusalem, and over all Judea; and probably over all the people among whom Christ had for more than three years preached the everlasting gospel; and that this darkness was supernatural, is evident from this, that it happened during the passover, which was celebrated only at the full moon, a time in which it was impossible for the sun to be eclipsed. But many suppose the darkness was over the whole world, and think

there is sufficient evidence of this in ancient authors.

This miraculous darkness should have caused the enemies of Christ to understand that he was the "Light of the world," and that because they did not walk in it, it was now taken away from them.

"There was in this also, doubtless, something designedly and strikingly emblematical. The eternal Light of light, who had frequently compared himself to the sun, the natural light of the world, was now undergoing temporary obscuration under the deep cloud of his humiliation, only to shine forth again in his true splendour at his resurrection from the dead."—R. WATSON.

4. *The veil of the temple was rent*—That is, the veil which separated the holy place, where the priests ministered, from the holy of holies, into which the high priest only entered, and that once a year, to make a general expiation for the sins of the people. This rending of the veil was emblematical, and pointed out, that the separation between Jews and Gentiles was now abolished, and that the privilege of the high priest was now communicated to all mankind: All might henceforth have access to the throne of grace, through the one great Atonement and Mediator, the Lord Jesus. See this beautifully illustrated in Hebrews x. 19.

5. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—These words are quoted by our Lord from Psalm xxi. 1; they are of very great importance, and should be carefully considered.

Some suppose "that the Divinity had now departed from Christ, and that his human nature was left unsupported to bear the punishment due to men for their sins." But this is by no means to be admitted, as it would deprive his sacrifice of its infinite merit, and consequently leave the sin of the world without an atonement. Take Deity away from any redeeming act of Christ, and redemption is ruined.

Through the whole of the sacred writings, God is represented as doing those things which, in the course of his providence, he only permits to be done; therefore the words, "to whom hast thou left" or "given me up," are only a form of expression for, "How astonishing is the

wickedness of those persons into whose hands I am fallen!" If this interpretation be admitted, it will free this celebrated passage from much embarrassment, and make it speak a sense consistent with itself, and with the dignity of the Son of God. One thing is certain, namely, that the words could not be used by our Lord in the sense in which they are generally understood. This is sufficiently evident; for he well knew why he was come unto that hour; nor could He be forsaken of God, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Deity, however, might restrain so much of its consolatory support, as to leave the human nature fully sensible of all its sufferings, so that the consolations might not take off any part of the keen edge of his passion; and this was necessary to make his sufferings meritorious. And it is probable, that this is all that is intended by our Lord's quotation from the twenty-second Psalm. Taken in this view, the words convey an unexceptionable sense, even in the common translation.

6. *It is finished*—As if he had said, "I have executed the great designs of the Almighty; I have satisfied the demands of his justice; I have accomplished all that was written in the prophets, and suffered the utmost malice of my enemies; and now the way to the Holy of holies is made manifest through my blood." An awful, yet a glorious, finish! Through this tragical death God is reconciled to man, and the kingdom of heaven opened to every believing soul.

"Shout heaven and earth, this sum of good to man!"

"What strain melodious charms my enraptured spirit? It is the chorus of the divine perfections, hymning their glorious Possessor. The harmonious attributes of Deity are blended in sweetest union: No jarring note is heard; no sound discordant. What beams of light and splendour arrest my dazzled vision? It is the constellation of the divine perfections mingling their concentrated rays. In that brilliant assemblage, in that radiant cluster, there are no diversities of glory. There, every star is of one magnitude, and of equal lustre. The goodness, the wisdom, and the power of our God are infinitely exerted in the

provision of such a Saviour. His justice is infinitely manifested, for Jesus sustains the whole punishment of sin; his sovereignty is infinitely displayed, for he extends to man that pardon denied to angels; and his mercy is infinitely revealed, for condemned sinners are not only reprieved, but pardoned; and not only pardoned, but crowned with glory. Thus Jehovah's honour is avenged; his righteous law is satisfied; the harmony of the universe is restored; creation is born again; and peace and joy, and gratitude and love, partake one common festival, raise one general song, and move in one mystic dance around the throne of the Eternal!"

—H. S. BOYD.

7. *Gave up the ghost*—"He dismissed the spirit." He himself willingly gave up that life which it was impossible for man to take away. It is not said that he hung on the cross till he died through pain and agony; nor is it said that his bones were broken, the sooner to put him out of pain, and to hasten his death; but that himself dismissed the soul, that he might thus become, not a forced sacrifice, but a free-will offering for sin.

Every man, since the fall, has not only been liable to death, but has deserved it; as all have forfeited their lives because of sin. Jesus Christ, as born immaculate, and having never sinned, had not forfeited his life, and therefore may be considered as naturally and properly immortal. "No man," says he, "taketh it," my life, "from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

8. *And the graves were opened*—By the earthquake; "and many bodies of saints which slept," that is, were dead; "sleep" being a common expression for death in the scriptures.

9. *And came out of the graves after his resurrection*—Not before, as some have thought, for Christ was himself "the first-fruits of them who slept." The graves were opened at his death, by the earthquake, and the bodies came out at his resurrection.

10. *And appeared unto many*—Thus establishing the truth of our Lord's resurrection in particular, and of the resurrection of the body in general, by many witnesses. (1.) The veil being rent, shows that his death is to put an end to the figurative worship, and to establish the true religion. (2.) The earthquake, that this dispensation of the gospel is to make known through the earth the judgments of God against sin and sinners. (3.) The rocks being rent, declare that the sacrifice of Christ is to make way for the grace of repentance. (4.) The graves being opened, that it is to destroy the death of sin, and confer the life of grace on sinners. (5.) The rising of the bodies of the saints shows, that this death of Christ is to merit, and his gospel publish, the eternal happiness of body and soul for all that believe in his name."

SECTION CCXIX.—THE BURIAL OF CHRIST.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVII. 55—61; MARK XV. 40—47;
LUKE XXIII. 49—56; JOHN XIX. 31—42.

AND all his acquaintance, and many women,¹ who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him, and followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, and Salome; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day,

(for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs : But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw *it* bare record, and his record is true : And he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scriptures should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. And now, after this, when the even² was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,³ behold, there came a rich man⁴ of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, named Joseph, an honourable counsellor, *and he was* a good man, and a just : (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them ;) who also himself waited for the kingdom of God, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. This man went in boldly unto Pilate,⁵ and begged that he might take away the body⁶ of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead : And calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him, whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew *it* of the centurion, Pilate gave *him* leave, *and* commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph. And Joseph bought fine linen, and came therefore, and took down the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.⁷ And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre. There laid they Jesus therefore in *Joseph's* own new tomb,⁸ which he had hewn in stone out of a rock, wherein was never man yet laid : Because that day was the Jews' preparation, and the sabbath drew on ; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary,⁹ *the mother* of Joses, and the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and sitting over against the sepulchre,¹⁰ beheld where and how his body was laid.¹¹ And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments ; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

1. *Many women*—To their everlasting honour, these women evidenced more courage, and affectionate attachment to their

Lord and Master, than the disciples did, who had promised to die with him, rather than forsake him. There were four re-

markable *Marys* mentioned in the Gospels.

(1.) *Mary*, the virgin, wife of *Joseph*: (2.) *Mary Salome*, her sister, wife of *Cleopas*: (3.) *Mary Magdalene*, or *Mary of Magdala*; and, (4.) *Mary*, the sister of *Martha* and *Lazarus*.

2. *When the even*—This must have been about three o'clock, or a little after; for our Lord having expired about three o'clock, and the Jewish passover beginning about four, it was necessary that *Joseph*, who would not fail to eat the passover at the usual time, should have obtained and buried the body of Christ some time before four o'clock. But such was the general consternation, occasioned by the prodigies that took place on this most awful occasion, that we may safely conjecture, that nothing was done in order, and perhaps the passover itself was not eaten at the usual hour, if at all, that day.

3. *The day before the sabbath*—What we would call "Friday evening." As the law of *Moses* had ordered that no criminal should continue hanging on a tree or gibbet till the setting of the sun, *Joseph*, fearing that the body of our Lord might be taken down, and thrown into the common grave with the two robbers, came and earnestly entreated *Pilate* to deliver it to him, that he might bury it in his own new tomb.

4. *A rich man*—He was a counsellor of the great sanhedrim; and, from the accounts given of him by the evangelists, we learn, that he was a man of the greatest respectability. He now acted a more honourable part than all the disciples of our Lord. He was of *Arimathea*, or *Rama*, in the tribe of *Benjamin*, but lived ordinarily in *Jerusalem*, as being a member of the great council.

5. *Went in boldly unto Pilate*—He who was a coward before now acts a more open, fearless part, than any of the disciples of our Lord! This the Holy Spirit has thought worthy of especial notice. It needed no small measure of courage to declare now for *Jesus*, who had been a few hours ago condemned as a blasphemer by the Jews, and as a seditious person by the Romans; and this was the more remarkable in *Joseph*, because hitherto, for fear of the Jews, he had been only a secret disciple of our Lord.

"It surely required courage to profess

reverential regard to one whom the sanhedrim had condemned as a blasphemer, and *Pilate* as a traitor and a rebel. Yet he went, trusting in God, and probably the somewhat uneasy conscience of *Pilate* disposed him the more readily to permit respect being shown to the remains of one whom, though knowing him to be innocent, he had delivered to death."—*R. WATSON*.

6. *Begged that he might take away the body*—That he might bury it honourably; otherwise, by the Jewish customs, he would have either been burned, or buried in the common place appointed for executed criminals.

7. *Wrapped it in a clean linen cloth*—The Jews, as well as the Egyptians, added spices to keep the body from putrefaction, and the linen was wrapped about every part to keep the aromatics in contact with the flesh. A mixture of myrrh and aloes of one hundred pounds' weight had been applied to the body of *Jesus* when he was buried. And a second embalment was intended, as the hurry to get the body interred before the sabbath did not permit them to complete the embalming in the first instance.

8. *There laid they Jesus in Joseph's own new tomb*—To all human appearance the body of Christ must have had the same burial-place with those of the two robbers, as he was numbered with the transgressors, and suffered with them; for then he was a sacrifice, bearing the sin of the world in his own body on the tree; but, now the sacrifice is offered, the atonement made and accepted, he is no longer to be enrolled with the transgressors, and, according to a prophecy delivered nearly seven hundred years before that time, he is to have the burying-place of a rich man. Had our Lord been buried in the common burial-ground of the malefactors, his resurrection could not have been so distinctly remarked, as the chief priests would never have thought of sealing the stone there, or setting a watch; but now that the body is got into the hands of a friend, they judge it necessary to make use of these precautions, in order, as they said, to prevent imposture; and from this very circumstance the resurrection of Christ had its fullest evidence, and was put beyond the power of successful contradiction. What a number of objections would not human

prudence have made to Joseph's conduct, had he consulted it on this occasion! It would have represented to him that "this was to expose himself, to bring himself into trouble, to render himself suspected, to put himself out of all capacity of doing good, to ruin himself irrecoverably; and now it could do no good to his Teacher; he is now dead, and needs no longer any office of kindness from men." There is, sometimes in our whole life, but one opportunity in which God designs signally to employ us; and, through our general backwardness to every good work, we are for reserving ourselves to other opportunities, in which God neither requires nor will accept our services.

9. *Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary*—The mother of James and Joses. The mother of our Lord had probably, by this time, been taken home to the house of John.

10. *Sitting over against the sepulchre*—These holy women, filled with that love to their Lord which death cannot destroy,

cleaved to him in life, and in death were not divided. They came to the grave to see the end, and, overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish, sat down to mourn.

11. *Behold where his body was laid*—The courage and affection of these holy women cannot be too much admired. The strength of the Lord is perfected in weakness; for here, a timid man, and a few weak women, acknowledge Jesus in death, when the strong and the mighty utterly forsook him.

Human strength and human weakness are only names in religion. The mightiest man, in the hour of trial, can do nothing without the strength of God; and the weakest woman can do all things, if Christ strengthen her. These truths are sufficiently exemplified in the case of Peter and all his brother disciples on the one hand; and Joseph of Arimathea and the two Marys on the other. And all this is recorded, equally to prevent both presumption and despair. Reader, let not these examples be produced before thee in vain.

SECTION CCXX.—A GUARD PLACED AT THE SEPULCHRE.

A.D. 29.

MATTHEW XXVII. 62—66.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember¹ that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.² Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: Go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.³

1. *Sir, we remember, &c.*—While these wicked men are fulfilling their own vicious counsels, they are subserving the great cause of Christianity. Every thing depended on the resurrection of Christ; if it did not appear that he rose from the dead, then the whole system was false, and no atonement was made. It was necessary therefore that the chief priests, &c., should

make use of every precaution to prevent an imposture, that the resurrection of Christ might have the fullest evidence to support it.

2. *After three days I will rise again*—This they probably took from his saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up." If so, they destroyed, by their own words, the false accusation

they brought against him to put him to death; then they perverted the meaning, now they declare it. Thus the wise are taken in their own craftiness. Neither the devil nor his servants ever speak truth, but when they expect to accomplish some bad purpose by it.

3. *Made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch*—The guard was to take care that the disciples should not steal him away; and the seal, which was probably the seal of the governor, was to prevent the guards from being corrupted so as to permit the theft. So every thing was done which human policy and prudence could, to prevent a resurrection, which these very precautions had the most direct tendency to authenticate and establish. How wonderful are the wisdom and goodness of God! and how true is it, that there is neither might nor counsel against him!

(1.) The death of Christ was ordered so as to be witnessed by thousands; and if his resurrection take place, it must be demonstrated; and it cannot take place without being incontestable, such are the precautions used here to prevent all imposture.

(2.) The more the circumstances of the death of Christ are examined, the more astonishing the whole will appear. The death is uncommon, the person uncommon, and the object uncommon; and the whole

is grand, majestic, and awful. Nature itself is thrown into unusual action, and by means and causes wholly supernatural. In every part, the finger of God most evidently appears.

(3.) How glorious does Christ appear in his death! Were it not for his thirst, his exclamation on the cross, and the piercing of his side, we should have found it difficult to believe that such a person could ever have entered the empire of death; but the Divinity and the manhood equally appear, and thus the certainty of the atonement is indubitably established.

(4.) But who can reflect on the state of the poor disciples, during the whole of the time in which our blessed Lord lay under the empire of death, without sharing their sorrows? When he expired on the cross, their expectation was cut off; and when his body was laid in the grave, their hopes were buried; and nothing but the resurrection of Christ from the dead could have given a resurrection to their hopes. It is true they had heard him say that he would rise again the third day; but in this it is evident their faith was very imperfect; and the uncertainty, perplexity, anxiety, and distress which they in consequence must have suffered, can neither be described nor imagined. Though we know the glorious result, yet who can help sympathising with the pious father, the virgin mother, and the disconsolate disciples?

SECTION CCXXI.—THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVIII. 1—8; MARK XVI. 1—8.

WHEN the sabbath was past,¹ Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, as it began to dawn, they came unto the sepulchre, to see *it*, at the rising of the sun. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven,² and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.³ And they said among themselves, *Who shall roll*

us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment: And they were affrighted. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Be not affrighted, for I know that ye seek Jesus⁴ of Nazareth,⁵ which was crucified. He is not here: For he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place⁶ where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples⁷ and Peter,⁸ that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you: Lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly, and fled from the sepulchre⁹ with fear and great joy;¹⁰ for they trembled and were amazed: Neither said they any thing to any man: For they were afraid; and did run to bring his disciples word.

1. *When the sabbath was past*—The transaction mentioned here evidently took place early on the morning of the third day after our Lord's crucifixion; what is called our Sunday morning, or first day of the next week.

2. *The angel of the Lord descended from heaven*—Matthew is very particular in this, to show that the word "angel" is not to be taken in the sense of an ordinary messenger, who might have come from Joseph of Arimathea, or from any other; but in the sense of an extraordinary messenger, who descended from God, out of heaven, for this very purpose. It is likely that the angel had descended, rolled away the stone, and was sitting on it, before the women reached the tomb.

"At the instant of this universal commotion, the blessed Jesus, awakening right early from that which was but a sleep to him, and will be no more to us who believe in him, left the bed of death. He arose, and came forth, almighty, all-glorious, fresh as the light of the morning, as a bridegroom proceeding out of his chamber, as a strong man prepared to run his course; and saying, or seeming to say, 'I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.'"—BISHOP HORNE.

3. *The keepers did shake, and became as dead men*—God can, by one and the same means, comfort his servants, and terrify his enemies. The resurrection of Christ is a subject of terror to the servants

of sin, and a subject of consolation to the sons of God; because it is a proof of the resurrection of both; the one to shame and everlasting contempt;—the other to eternal glory and joy.

4. *I know that ye seek Jesus*—Speaking after the manner of men, these women deserved to be the first witnesses of the resurrection of Christ: During life they ministered to him, and in death they were not divided. They attended him to the cross, notwithstanding their attachment to him exposed them to the most imminent danger; and now they come to watch and weep at his tomb. The common opinion is, that women are more fickle and less courageous than men. The reverse of this I believe to be the truth, in those who are thoroughly converted to God; and who, previously to conversion, whether man or woman, can be trusted in any case?

"When the Lord of life and glory spurned the powers of death, and burst the barriers of the tomb, the resurrection of every man was demonstrated to be certain. His was the resurrection of the great federal Head and Representative of the human race. He was the inestimable first-fruits presented before the Lord, as the pledge and the specimen of the future harvest. It was in him the grand decisive experiment was tried; the experiment on which the fate of the universe hung. Had Jesus remained in the grave, despair had covered all. He prevailed, he triumphed, he rose! And now the faith-

ful throughout all generations may exclaim, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"—BROMLEY.

5. *Of Nazareth*—The Jews had given this name to Christ by way of reproach; but as it was under this name that he was crucified, the angel here, and the apostles after, have given him the same name. Names which the world, in derision, fixes on the followers of God, often become the general appellatives of religious bodies: Thus Quakers, Puritans, Pietists, and Methodists, have in their respective times been the nicknames given in derision by the world, to those who separated themselves from its corruptions. Our Lord, by continuing to bear the name of the Nazarene, teaches us not to be too nice or scrupulous in fixing our own appellation. No matter what the name may be, as long as it implies no particular evil, and serves sufficiently to mark us out. Let us be contented to bear it, and thus carry about with us the reproach of Christ; always taking care to keep our garments unspotted from the world.

6. *Come, see the place*—The tomb in which our Lord was laid was no doubt like the rest of the Jewish burying-places, a receptacle for the several dead of a whole family, divided into separate niches, where

each had his place. "Come and see the place," was tantamount to, "Come and see the niche in which he was laid, it is now empty;" nor was there any other body in the place, for the tomb was a new one, in which no man had ever been laid, so there could be no deception in the case.

7. *Go quickly, and tell his disciples*—Thus these faithful women proclaim the gospel to those who were afterwards to be the teachers of the whole human race! Behold what honour God puts upon those who persevere in his truth, and continue to acknowledge him before men!

8. *And Peter*—Why is not Peter included among the disciples? For this plain reason: He had forfeited his discipleship, and all right to the honour and privileges of an apostle, by denying his Lord and Master. However, he is now a penitent: Tell him that Jesus is risen from the dead, and is ready to heal his backsliding, and love him freely; so that, after being converted, he may strengthen his brethren.

9. *They departed quickly, and fled from the sepulchre*—At the desire of the angel they went into the tomb, to have the fullest certainty of the resurrection.

10. *Fear and great joy*—"Fear," produced by the appearance of this glorious messenger of God; "and great joy," occasioned by the glad tidings of the resurrection of their Lord and Master.

SECTION CCXXII.—THE GUARDS ARE BRIBED.

A.D. 29. MATTHEW XXVIII. 11—15; LUKE XXIV. 1—9, 11.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch¹ came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders,² and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night,³ and stole him *away* while we slept.⁴ And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them. And

they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words,⁵ and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

1. *Some of the watch*—Or “guards.” Probably the rest still remained at the tomb, waiting for orders to depart, and had sent these to intimate to their employers the things that had taken place.

2. *With the elders*—That is, the “senators” of the great sanhedrim, or Jewish council of state, elsewhere called “the elders of the people.” They could now meet, as the sabbath was over.

3. *His disciples come by night*—This was as absurd as it was false. On one hand, the terror of the disciples, the smallness of their number, (only eleven,) and their almost total want of faith; on the other, the great danger of such a bold enterprise, the number of armed men who guarded the tomb, the authority of Pilate and of the sanhedrim, must render such an imposture as this utterly void of credit.

4. *Stole him away while we slept*—Here is a whole heap of absurdities: (1.) Is it likely that so many men would all fall asleep in the open air at once? (2.) Is it at all probable that a Roman guard should be found off their watch, much less asleep, when it was instant death, according to the Roman military laws, to be found in this state? (3.) Could they be so sound asleep as not to awake with all the noise which must be necessarily made by removing the great stone, and taking away the body? (4.) Is it at all likely that these disciples could have had time sufficient to do all this, and to come and return, without being perceived by any person? And, (5.) If they were asleep, how could they possibly know that it was the disciples that stole him, or,

indeed, that any person or persons stole him? for, being asleep, they could see no person. From their own testimony, therefore, the resurrection may be as fully proved as the theft.

5. *They remembered his words*—Even the simple recollection of the words of Christ becomes often a source of comfort and support to those who are distressed or tempted; for his words are the words of eternal life.

“Surely there is nothing in the whole sacred story which does, in a more affecting manner, illustrate the deplorable hardness of the human heart in this degenerate state, than the portion of it which is now before us. What but the testimony of an apostle could have been sufficient to persuade us, that men, who had been but a few hours before the witnesses of such an awful scene, who had beheld the angel descending, had felt the earth trembling, and had seen the sepulchre bursting open by a Divine power, and had fallen down in helpless astonishment and confusion, perhaps expecting every moment to be themselves destroyed, should that very day, yea, that very morning, suffer themselves to be hired by a sum of money to do their utmost to asperse the character of Christ, and to invalidate the evidence of his resurrection, of which they were, in effect, eye-witnesses? Nay, how astonishing is it that the chief priests themselves, the public ministers of the Lord of Hosts, could act such a part as this! They hear this full evidence, that he, that Jesus whom they had murdered, was risen from the dead; and they well knew and remembered that he had himself put

the proof of his mission on this very fact ; a fact to which the prodigies at his death, which they themselves had seen and felt, added an inexpressible weight of probability. Who would not have expected that they should not have been alarmed, convinced, and humbled ; that they should have turned the remaining days of the passover into a public fast, and have sol-

licitously sought out him who was so powerfully 'declared to be the Son of God,' to cast themselves at his feet, and entreat his pardon and grace ? But instead of this, with invincible and growing malice, they set themselves to oppose him, and bribe the soldiers to testify a lie, the most to his dishonour of any that hell could invent."—
DODDRIDGE.

SECTION CCXXIII.—CHRIST APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE.

A. D. 29. MARK XVI. 9 ; LUKE XXIV. 10, 12 ; JOHN XX. 1—17.

THE first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles. Then arose Peter,¹ and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together : And the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying ;² yet went he not in.³ Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home, wondering at that which was to come to pass. Now 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. But *she* stood without at the sepulchre weeping : And as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it

was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary.⁴ She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father⁵ and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

1. *Then arose Peter*—John went with him, and got to the tomb before him.

2. *Saw the linen clothes lying, &c.*—Or, “the linen clothes only.” This was the fine linen which Joseph of Arimathea bought, and wrapped the body in. Small as this circumstance may at first view appear, it is, nevertheless, no mean proof of the resurrection of our Lord. Had the body been stolen away, all that was wrapped about it would have been taken away with it; as the delay which must have been occasioned by stripping it might have led to the detection of the theft; nor would the disciples have run such a risk if they had stolen him, when stripping the body could have answered no end. “Peter seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.” All these circumstances prove that the thing was done leisurely; order and regularity being observed through the whole. Hurry and confusion necessarily mark every act of robbery.

3. *Went he not in*—Why? Because he was fully satisfied that the body was not there. But why did he not seize upon the linen clothes, and keep them as a most precious relic? Because he had too much religion and too much sense; and the time of superstition and nonsense was not yet arrived, in which, bits of rotten wood, rags

of rotten cloth, decayed bones, to whom originally belonging no one knows, and bramble bushes, should become objects of religious adoration.

4. *Mary*—This word was no doubt spoken with uncommon emphasis; and the usual sound of Christ's voice accompanied it, so as immediately to prove that it must be Jesus. What transports of joy must have filled this woman's heart! Let it be remarked, that Mary Magdalene sought Jesus more fervently, and continued more affectionately attached to him, than any of the rest; therefore, to her, first, Jesus is pleased to show himself, and she is made the first herald of the gospel of a risen Saviour.

5. *I ascend unto my Father*—“Let the faith of what has been done with regard to our glorified Head, and shall at length be accomplished with respect to all his members, daily gladden our hearts. When our eyes are weeping, and our souls sinking within us, let us raise our thoughts to Jesus, our risen, and now-ascended Redeemer, who says to all his brethren these gracious words, which may justly be received with transports of astonishment, and fill our hearts at the same time ‘with joy unspeakable and full of glory:’ ‘I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God.’—DODDRIDGE,

SECTION CCXXIV.—CHRIST GOING TO EMMAUS.

A. D. 29. MARK XVI. 10—13; LUKE XXIV. 13—35;
JOHN XX. 18.

AND Mary Magdalene came to the disciples, as they mourned and wept, and told them that she had seen the Lord, and *that*

he had spoken these things unto her. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them. *For*, behold, two of them¹ went that same day into the country, to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned,² Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: And beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: But him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe³ all that the prophets have spoken: ⁴ Ought not Christ to have suffered⁵ these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses⁶ and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: And he made as though he would have gone further.⁷ But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: For it is toward evening,⁸ and the day is far spent. And he went in⁹ to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread,¹⁰ and blessed *it*, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told

what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. Neither believed they them.

1. *Behold, two of them*—One of these disciples was Cleopas, and the other is supposed by many learned men, both ancient and modern, to have been Luke himself.

2. *And reasoned*—Concerning the probability or improbability of Christ being the Messiah, or of his resurrection from the dead. It was a laudable custom of the Jews, and very common also, to converse about the law in all their journeyings; and now they had especial reason to discourse together, both of the law and the prophets, from the transactions which had recently taken place.

3. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe*—Inconsiderate men, justly termed such, because they had not properly attended to the description given of the Messiah by the Prophets, nor to his teaching and miracles, as proofs that he alone was the person they described. "Slow of heart," "backward," not easy to be persuaded of the truth, always giving way to doubtfulness and distrust. This very imperfection in them is a strong evidence of the truth of the doctrine which they afterwards believed, and proclaimed to the world. Had they not had the fullest assurance of these things, they never would have credited them; and it is no small honour to the new-covenant scriptures that such persons were chosen, first, to believe them; secondly, to proclaim them in the world; and, thirdly, to die on the evidence of those truths, the blessed influence of which they felt in their own hearts, and fully exemplified in their lives.

4. *All that the prophets have spoken*—Reason only by analogy from what is past: Did not the prophets foretell wonderful and almost incredible things of Christ? And which of these came not to pass? And shall He who did not deceive you in those events delude you in other matters? Lay it down, then, for certain, and much more to be depended upon than any thing can be that we hear, see, or handle, that there is no where to be found so infallible truth as that which occurs in these books, which were inspired by the God of truth, promulgated by the holy prophets, sealed by the blood of all the martyrs, believed by pious

men for many ages, delivered by Christ incarnate, ratified by miracles, acknowledged with horror by devils, which are so consistent with the law of nature and with themselves, and which produce such wonderful effects upon those who read them with attention and reverence."—ERASMUS.

5. *Ought not Christ to have suffered*—"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer? This was the way in which sin must be expiated, and, without this, no soul could have been saved. The suffering Messiah is he alone by whom Israel and the world can be saved.

"If the Almighty were, by a mere act of grace, to pardon that the sinfulness of which is infinite, his rational creatures could have no means of judging whether goodness were really so very lovely, and sin so very odious, in his eyes? How could they know whether he preferred the one to the other? How could they know whether there was any essential difference between the one and the other?"—H. S. BOYD.

6. *Beginning at Moses, &c.*—What a sermon this must have been, where all the prophecies relative to the incarnation, birth, teaching, miracles, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the blessed Jesus were all adduced, illustrated, and applied to himself, by an appeal to the well-known facts which had taken place during his life! We are almost irresistibly impelled to exclaim, "What a pity this discourse had not been preserved!" No wonder their hearts burned within them, while hearing such a sermon, from such a Preacher. The law and the prophets had all borne testimony, either directly or indirectly, to Christ; and we may naturally suppose that these prophecies and references were those which our Lord at this time explained and applied to himself.

7. *He made as though he would have gone further*—That is, "He was going on, as though he intended to go further;" and so he doubtless would, had they not earnestly pressed him to lodge with them. His preaching had made a deep impression upon their hearts, and now they feel it their

greatest privilege to entertain the Preacher. This is a constant effect of the doctrine of Christ: Wherever it is felt, the Author of it, the ever-blessed Jesus, is earnestly entreated to dwell in the heart; and he who preaches it is amply provided with the necessaries of life by those who have received his testimony.

8. *For it is toward evening*—And consequently both inconvenient and unsafe to proceed to another village. Reader, it is probably the eve of thy life, whether thou be old or young; thy day may have already declined, and there is, possibly, but a step between thee and the eternal world! Hath the Lord Jesus taught thee by his word and Spirit to believe in him, that thou mightest be saved? Is he come into thy heart? Hast thou the witness of his Spirit

that thy sin is blotted out through his blood? If thou have not, get thee to God right humbly. Jesus is about to pass by, perhaps for ever! O constrain him, by earnest faith and prayer, to enter into thy soul, and lodge with thee! May God open thy eyes! May he stir up and inflame thy heart!

9. *And he went in*—And so he will to thee, thou penitent soul! therefore, take courage, and be not faithless, but believing.

10. *He took bread*—This was the office of the master and father of a family; and this was our Lord's usual custom among his disciples. Those whom Christ lodges with he feeds, and feeds too with bread that himself hath blessed, and this feeding not only strengthens, but also enlightens, the soul.

SECTION CCXXV.—CHRIST APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM.

A. D. 29.

LUKE XXIV. 36—43; JOHN XX. 19—23.

THEN the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, and as they thus spake,¹ came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.² But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.³ And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet and his side.⁴ Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. And while they yet believed not for joy,⁵ and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took *it*, and did eat before them. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you:⁶ As *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.⁷ And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*,⁸ and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: ⁹ Whose soever sins ye remit,¹⁰ they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

1. *And as they thus spake*—While the two disciples who were going to Emmaus were conversing about Christ, he joined

himself to their company. Now, while they and the apostles are confirming each other in their belief of his resurrection, Jesus

comes in, to remove every doubt, and to give them the fullest evidence of it. And it is ever true, that, "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them."

2. *Peace be unto you*—"May you prosper in body and soul, and enjoy every heavenly and earthly good!"

3. *And supposed that they had seen a spirit*—But if there be no such thing as a disembodied spirit, would not our Lord have shown them their error? Instead of this, he confirms them in their opinion, by saying, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have;" therefore he says, "Handle me, and see me." They probably imagined, that it was the soul only of our blessed Lord which they saw; but they were soon fully convinced of the identity of his person, and the reality of his resurrection; for, (1.) They saw his body. (2.) They heard him speak. (3.) They handled him. (4.) They saw him eat a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb, which they gave him. In these things it was impossible for them to have been deceived.

4. *He shewed them his hands and his side*—So it appears that his body bore the marks of the nails and the spear; and these marks were preserved, that the disciples might be the more fully convinced of the reality of his resurrection.

5. *They yet believed not for joy*—They were so overcome with the joy of his resurrection, that they did not, for some time, properly receive the evidence that was before them; as we phrase it, "They thought the news too good to be true."

6. *Peace be unto you*—His usual salutation and benediction. "May every blessing of heaven and earth which you need be granted unto you!"

7. *Even so send I you*—As I was sent to proclaim the truth of the Most High, and to convert sinners to God, I send you for the very same purpose, clothed with the very same authority, and influenced by the very same Spirit.

8. *He breathed on them*—Intimating, by this, that they were to be made new men, in order to be properly qualified for the work to which he had called them; for in this breathing he evidently alluded to the first creation of man, when God breathed into him the breath of lives, and

he became a living soul: The breath or Spirit of God being the grand principle and cause of his spiritual and divine life.

9. *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*—From this act of our Lord, the influences of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men have been termed his inspiration; from *in* "into," and *spiro*, "I breathe." Every word of Christ which is received in the heart by faith comes accompanied by this divine breathing; and, without this, there is neither light nor life. Just as Adam was, before God breathed the quickening spirit into him, so is every human soul till it receives this inspiration. Nothing is seen, known, discerned, or felt of God, but through this. To every private Christian this is essentially requisite; and no man ever did or ever can preach the gospel of God, so as to convince and convert sinners, without it.

10. *Whose soever sins ye remit*—It is certain God alone can forgive sins; and it would not only be blasphemous, but grossly absurd, to say that any creature could remit the guilt of a transgression which had been committed against the Creator. The apostles received from the Lord the doctrine of reconciliation, and the doctrine of condemnation. They who believed on the Son of God, in consequence of their preaching, had their sins remitted; and they who would not believe were declared to lie under condemnation.

"Thus ended the transactions of the day on which our Lord arose from the dead; a day much to be remembered by men throughout all generations, because it brought fully into act the conceptions which had lodged in the breast of Infinite Wisdom from eternity, even those thoughts of love and mercy on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have therefore the greatest reason to solemnize this day with gladness each returning week, by ceasing from labour, and giving themselves up to holy meditations, and other exercises of devotion. The redemption of mankind, which they commemorate thereon in its finishing stroke, affords matter for eternal thought, being such a subject as no other, how great soever, can equal; and whose lustre neither length of time nor frequent reviewing can ever diminish."—MACKNIGHT.

"All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church at Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible writers."—MOSHEIM.

SECTION CCXXVI.—CHRIST APPEARS TO THE ELEVEN, THOMAS BEING PRESENT.

A. D. 29.

MARK XVI. 14; JOHN XX. 24—29.

BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them¹ when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his eleven disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *Then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst as they sat at meat, and said, Peace *be* unto you. And he upbraided them with their unbelief² and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: And be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered³ and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed *are* they⁴ that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

1. *Thomas, called Didymus, was not with them*—And, by absenting himself from the company of the disciples, he lost this precious opportunity of seeing and hearing Christ; and of receiving, at this time, the inestimable blessing of the Holy Ghost. Where two or three are assembled in the name of Christ, he is in the midst of them. Christ had said this before: Thomas should have remembered it, and not have forsaken the company of the disciples. What is the consequence? His unbelief becomes, (1.) Utterly unreasonable: Ten of his brethren witnessed that they had seen Christ; but he rejected their testimony. (2.) His unbelief became obstinate: He was determined not to believe on any evidence that it might please God to give him: He would believe according to his own pre-

judices, or not at all. (3.) His unbelief became presumptuous and insolent: A view of the person of Christ will not suffice: He will not believe that it is he, unless he can put his finger into the holes made by the nails in his Lord's hands, and thrust his hand into the wound made by the spear in his side.

Thomas had lost much good, and gained much evil, and yet was insensible of his state. Behold the consequences of forsaking the assemblies of God's people! Jesus comes to the meeting; a disciple is found out of his place, who might have been there; and he is not only not blessed, but his heart becomes hardened and darkened through the deceitfulness of sin. It was through God's mere mercy that ever Thomas had another opportunity of being

convinced of his error. Reader! take warning.

2. *And he upbraided them with their unbelief*—Never were there a people so difficult to be persuaded of the truth of spiritual things as the disciples. It may be justly asserted, that people of so sceptical a turn of mind would never credit any thing till they had the fullest evidence of its truth. The unbelief of the disciples is a strong proof of the truth of the gospel of God.

3. *Thomas answered, &c.*—Those who deny the Godhead of Christ would have us to believe that these words are an exclamation of Thomas, made through surprise, and that they were addressed to the Father, and not to Christ. The text is plain: Jesus comes in, sees Thomas, and addresses him; desiring him to come to him, and put his finger into the print of the nails, &c. Thomas, perfectly satisfied of the reality of our Lord's resurrection, says unto him, "My Lord! and my God!" that is, Thou art indeed the very same person, "my Lord," whose disciple I have so long been; and thou art "my God," henceforth the object of my religious adoration. Thomas was the first who gave the title of "God" to Jesus; and, by this glorious confession, made some amends for his former obstinate incredulity. It is worthy of remark, that from this time forward the whole of the disciples treated our Lord with the most supreme respect, never using that familiarity towards him which they had often used before. The resurrection from the dead gave them the fullest proof of the Divinity of Christ. And this, indeed, is the use which St. John makes of this manifestation of Christ.

4. *Blessed are they, &c.*—"Thou hast seen, and therefore thou hast believed, and

now thou art blessed; thou art now happy; fully convinced of my resurrection; yet no less blessed shall all those be who believe in my resurrection, without the evidence thou hast had." From this we learn, that to believe in Jesus, on the testimony of his apostles, will put a man into the possession of the very same blessedness which they themselves enjoyed. And so has God constituted the whole economy of grace, that a believer, at eighteen hundred years' distance from the time of the resurrection, suffers no loss because he has not seen Christ in the flesh.

Reader! Christ died for thee! believe, and thou shalt be saved, and become as blessed and as happy as an apostle.

"That a religion which taught men to be meek and humble, disposed to receive injuries, but not to do any; a religion which gave countenance to the poor and lowly, at a time when riches were adored, and ambition and pleasure had possessed the hearts of all mankind; that such a religion, in such an age, by the sermons and conduct of fishermen, men of mean breeding and illiberal arts, should so speedily triumph over the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the discourses of the eloquent; the power of princes, and the interests of states; the inclination of nature and the blindness of zeal; the force of custom, and the solicitation of passions; the pleasures of sin, and the busy arts of the devil; that is, against wit and power, superstition and wilfulness, fame and money, nature and empire,—which are all the causes in this world that can make a thing impossible;—this, this is to be ascribed to the power of God, and is the great demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus."—BISHOP TAYLOR.

SECTION CCXXVII.—CHRIST APPEARS TO THE BRETHREN IN GALILEE.

A.D. 29.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 9, 10, 16—20.

AND as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them,¹ saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid:² Go tell my brethren³ that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see

me. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: But some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them,⁴ saying, All power is given unto me⁵ in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore,⁶ and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,⁷ and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things⁸ whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway,⁹ *even* unto the end of the world.¹⁰ Amen.

1. *Jesus met them*—Christ bestows his graces and consolations by degrees, first by his angels, and then by himself. He does not reveal himself to incredulous and disobedient souls; he appears not even to those women, till he has tried their faith and obedience by his ministering angels.

“ ‘Behold here,’ says PARÆUS, ‘the reward of obedience, and the remedy for timidity!’ God still meets his people in the use of his ordinances, showing them great and mighty things that they knew not before, Jer. xxxiii. 3.”—JOHN TRAPP.

2. *Be not afraid*—They were seized with fear at the sight of the angel; and this was now renewed by this unexpected appearance of Christ.

3. *Go tell my brethren*—This is the first time our Lord called his disciples by this endearing name. They no doubt thought that their Lord would reproach them with their past cowardice and infidelity; but, in speaking thus, he gives them a full assurance, in the most tender terms, that all that was past was as buried for ever.

“He is of the noblest blood that is a son and heir of God, a brother and co-heir of Christ. Others, perhaps, may be the sons of kings, but be it your chief boast really to be, as well as to be called, the son of God. Let them plume themselves upon their dwelling in the courts of princes; but be it your choice rather, as it was David’s, to be a door-keeper in the house of God. The greatest baseness is, to be a slave to vice, and to have no affinity or resemblance to Christ, who acknowledges none for his brethren, but they that shall do the will of his heavenly Father.”—ERASMUS.

4. *And Jesus came and spake unto them*—It is supposed by some, that the reason why any doubted was, that when they saw

Jesus at first, he was at a distance; but, when he “came up,” drew near to them, they were fully persuaded of the identity of his person.

5. *All power is given unto me*—Or, “All authority in heaven and upon earth is given unto me.” One fruit of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ is represented to be, his having authority, or right, in heaven to send down the Holy Spirit, to raise up his followers thither, and to crown them in the kingdom of an endless glory: In earth, to convert sinners; to sanctify, protect, and perfect his church; to subdue all nations to himself; and, finally, to judge all mankind. If Jesus Christ were not equal with the Father, could he have claimed this equality of power, without being guilty of impiety and blasphemy? Surely not; and does he not in the fullest manner assert his Godhead, and his equality with the Father, by claiming and possessing all the authority in heaven and earth? that is, all the power and authority by which both empires are governed?

6. *Go ye therefore*—Because I have the authority aforesaid, and can send whomsoever I will, to do whatsoever I please: “Teach,” make disciples of, “all nations,” bring them to an acquaintance with God who bought them, and then baptize them in the name of the Father. It is natural to suppose, that adults were the first subjects of baptism; for, as the gospel was, in a peculiar manner, sent to the Gentiles, they must hear and receive it, before they could be expected to renounce their old prejudices and idolatries, and come into the bonds of the Christian covenant. But certainly no argument can be drawn from this concession against the baptism of children. When the Gentiles and Jews had received the faith and blessings of the gospel, it is

natural enough to suppose they should wish to get their children incorporated with the visible church of Christ; especially if, as many pious and learned men have believed, baptism succeeded to circumcision, which I think has never yet been disproved. The apostles knew well, that the Jews not only circumcised the children of proselytes, but also baptized them; and as they now received a commission to teach and proselyte all the nations, and baptize them in the name of the Holy Trinity, they must necessarily understand that infants were included; nor could they, the custom of their country being considered, have understood our Lord differently, unless he had, in the most express terms, said that they were not to baptize children; which neither he nor his apostles ever did. And as to the objection, that the baptized were obliged to profess their faith, and that, therefore, only adults should be baptized, there is no weight at all in it; because what is spoken of such refers to those who, only at that period of life, heard the gospel, and were not born of parents who had been Christians; therefore they could not have been baptized into the Christian faith, forasmuch as no such faith was at their infancy preached in the world.

7. *In the name of the Father, &c.*—Baptism, properly speaking, whether administered by dipping or sprinkling, signifies a full and eternal consecration of the person to the service and honour of that Being in whose name it is administered; but this consecration can never be made to a creature; therefore, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are not creatures. Again: Baptism is not made in the name of a quality or attribute of the Divine Nature; therefore the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are not qualities or attributes of the Divine Nature. The orthodox, as they are termed, have generally considered this text a decisive proof of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: And what else can they draw from it? Is it possible for words to convey a plainer sense than these do? And do they not direct every reader to consider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as three distinct Persons?

“To be baptized into the name of any one, implies a professed dependence upon

him, and devoted subjection to him; to be baptized, therefore, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, implies a professed dependence on these three divine Persons, jointly and equally, and devoting ourselves to them as worshippers and servants. This is proper and obvious, upon the supposition of the mysterious unity of three co-equal Persons in the unity of this Godhead; but not to be accounted for upon any other principles.”—SCOTT.

“Baptism is the (outward) receiving men from a state of sin and wrath into a state of favour, and into the rights of the sons of God and the hopes of eternal happiness, and is a calling them by the name of God. These are things that can only be offered and assured to men in the name of the great and eternal God; and, therefore, since, without any distinction or note of inequality, they are all three set together as persons in whose name this is to be done, they must be all three the true God: Otherwise it looks like a just prejudice against our Saviour and his whole gospel, that, by his express direction, the first entrance to it, which gives the visible and federal right to those great blessings that are offered by it, or their initiation into it, should be in the name of two created beings, (if the one can, according to their hypothesis, be properly called so much as a being,) and that even in an equality with the Supreme and Increased Being.”—BISHOP BURNET.

8. *Teaching them to observe all things*—Men are ignorant of divine things, and must be taught. Only those can be considered as proper teachers of the ignorant who are thoroughly instructed in whatsoever Christ has commanded. Persons who are entrusted with the public ministry of the word should take care, that they teach not human creeds and confessions of faith, in place of the sacred writings; but those things, and those only, which Jesus has commanded.

9. *And, lo, I am with you always*—Literally, “Behold, I am with you every day.” A minister of Christ should consider, that while his soul simply and uniformly follows Jesus, he shall be made a constant instrument of bringing many sons and daughters to glory. The dark, it is true, must be enlightened, the ignorant instructed,

the profligate reclaimed, the guilty justified, and the unholy sanctified; and who is sufficient for this work? He with whom the Son of God is every day, and none other.

10. *Unto the end of the world*—And this is indispensably necessary, because the presence and influence of Jesus Christ are essentially requisite in every age of the world, to enlighten, instruct, and save the lost. The promise takes in not only the primitive apostles, but also all their successors in the Christian ministry, as long as the earth shall endure.

One thing the pious and intelligent reader has no doubt already noticed: There is not one truth, or doctrine, in the whole oracles of God, which is not taught in this evangelist. The outlines of the whole spiritual system are here correctly laid down; even Paul himself has added nothing; he has amplified and illustrated the truths contained in this Gospel: But, even under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, neither he nor any other of the apostles have brought to light any one truth, the prototype of which has not been found in the words or acts of our blessed Lord, as related by Matthew, in the work which has already passed under review. The Gospel by St. Matthew is the grand text-book of Christianity; the other Gospels are collateral evidences of its truth, and the apostolic epistles are comments on the text. In the commencement of this work, I stated my wish, "to assist my fellow-labourers in the

vineyard to lead men to Him who is the Fountain of all excellence, goodness, truth, and happiness; to magnify his law, and make it honourable; to show the wonderful provision made in his gospel for the recovery and salvation of a sinful world; to prove that God's great design is to make his creatures happy; and that such a salvation as it becomes God to give, and such as man needs to receive, is within the grasp of every human soul." And having thus far done what I could, in reference to these great and important purposes, here I register my thanks to the ever-blessed God, Father, Word, and Holy Spirit, that he has permitted me to cast my mite into this sacred treasury, to add my feeble testimony to his eternal truth; and has spared me, in the midst of many infirmities and oppressive labours, to see the conclusion of this Gospel, a consummation which I had long devoutly wished, but which I had scarcely hoped ever to see realized.

May the divine Author of this sacred book give the reader a heart-felt experience of all the truths it contains; make and keep him wise unto salvation; build him up in this most holy faith; and give him an inheritance among the blessed, through Christ Jesus, the Friend of mankind, and the Saviour of sinners, who is the Object and End of this glorious system of truth! And to Him, with the Father and Eternal Spirit, be glory and dominion, thanksgiving and obedience, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

SECTION CCXXVIII.—CHRIST APPEARS AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XXI. 1—14.

AFTER these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then

Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.¹ Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire² of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples,³ after that he was risen from the dead.

1. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord*—“He who loves Christ, will always know him when he comes in the disguise of a stranger or a poor man; he will know that it is the Lord who asks relief of him in their persons; and he will inform others of the same great truth.”—BISHOP HORNE.

2. *They saw a fire, &c.*—This appears to have been a new miracle. It could not have been a fire which the disciples had there, for it is remarked as something new; besides, they had caught no fish, and here was a small fish upon the coals, and a loaf of bread provided to eat with it. The whole appears to have been miraculously prepared by Christ.

3. *This is now the third time that Jesus had shewed himself to his disciples*—That is, this was the third time he appeared unto the apostles, when all or most of them were together. He appeared to ten of them, again to eleven of them, and at this time to seven of them. But, when the other evangelists are collated, we shall find that this was the seventh time in which he had manifested himself after he arose from the dead. (1.) He appeared to Mary of

Magdala. (2.) To the holy women who came from the tomb. (3.) To the two disciples who went to Emmaus. (4.) To St. Peter alone. (5.) To the ten, in the absence of Thomas. (6.) Eight days after to the eleven, Thomas being present. (7.) To the seven, mentioned in verse 2, which was between the eighth and fortieth day after his resurrection. Besides these seven appearances, he showed himself, (8.) To the disciples on a certain mountain in Galilee. If the appearance mentioned by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 6, to upwards of five hundred brethren at once; if this be not the same with his appearance on a mountain in Galilee, it must be considered the ninth. According to the same apostle, he was seen of James, which may have been the tenth appearance: And, after this, to all the apostles, when, at Bethany, he ascended to heaven in their presence. This appears to have been the eleventh time in which he distinctly manifested himself after his resurrection. But there might have been many other manifestations, which the evangelists have not thought proper to enumerate, as not being connected with any thing of singular weight or importance.

“ If, therefore, the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets ; if heaven and earth ; if angels from above, and the dead from beneath ; if the appearances of Christ himself on earth and from heaven ; if the Spirit of truth, with all his gifts and graces ; if the miracles of the apostles, the lives of saints, the sufferings of confessors, and the deaths of martyrs ; if the conversion of the world to the faith of a crucified Saviour, without power, wealth, or learning ; if the church, with the antiquity, universality, and consent of her institutions and services

for above seventeen centuries, from the day on which Christ was first seen by the eleven, after his resurrection, to this hour ; and, lastly, if the objections of the adversary establishing the truth which they were intended to subvert ; that is to say, in one word, if all the evidence which God can give, or man receive, be sufficient to prove a matter of fact ; then may we evermore rejoice, and evermore let us therefore rejoice, in all the glorious consequences of the proposition : ‘ The Lord is risen indeed.’ ”—
BISHOP HORNE.

SECTION CCXXIX.—CHRIST'S CHARGE TO PETER.

A.D. 29.

JOHN XXI. 15—24.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me¹ more than these ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me ? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest : But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,² and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.³ And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.⁴ Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following ; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee ? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do* ? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come,⁵ what *is that* to thee ? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die : Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee ? This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things : And we know that his testimony is true.

1. *Simon, lovest thou me*—Peter had thrice denied his Lord, and now Christ gives him an opportunity in some measure to repair his fault by a triple confession.

"More than these?"—This was a kind of reproach to Peter: He had professed a more affectionate attachment to Christ than the rest; he had been more forward in making professions of friendship and love than any of the others; and no one, Judas excepted, had treated his Lord so basely. As he had before intimated that his attachment to his Master was more than that of the rest, our Lord now puts the question to him, "Dost thou love me more than these?" to which Peter made the most modest reply, "Thou knowest I love thee," but no longer dwells on the strength of his love, nor compares himself with even the meanest of his brethren. He had before cast the very unkind reflection on his brethren, "Though all be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But he had now learned, by dreadful experience, that he who trusteth his own heart is a fool; and that a man's sufficiency for good is of the Lord alone.

"Imagine the Saviour of the world looking down from his throne, and applying this question to you; to each of you; young or old; rich or poor; learned or illiterate; while all heaven and hell are in suspense, anxiously waiting for your reply, 'Lovest thou me?' (1.) The question is reasonable. Contemplate his person: Observe his doings, what he has done, what he is doing, what he will do. Mark his sufferings. (2.) Important. This love is necessary to our sanctification; to give us delight in all our religious services; to render our duties acceptable; to ascertain our interest in the Saviour's regards. (3.) Supposes doubt. Is there nothing to render it doubtful to the world, to the church, to yourselves, to the Saviour? With regard to right, he may, and he often does, complain in his word, as if he was disappointed and surprised at the conduct of his professing people. (4.) The question admits of solution. This love will show itself by our thoughts, our speech, by desire after intimacy, by devotedness to the service and glory of its Master."—
JAY.

2. *Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands*—It was a custom at Rome to put the necks of those who were to be crucified into a

yoke, and to stretch out their hands and fasten them to the end of it; and having thus led them through the city, they were carried out to be crucified. Thus, then, Peter was girded, chained, and carried whither he would not: Not that he was unwilling to die for Christ; but he was a man, he did not love death; but he loved his life less than he loved his God.

3. *Should glorify God*—Ancient writers state, that, about thirty-four years after this, Peter was crucified; and that he deemed it so glorious a thing to die for Christ, that he begged to be crucified with his head downwards, not considering himself worthy to die in the same posture in which his Lord did.

4. *Follow me*—Whether our Lord meant by these words that Peter was to walk with him a little way for a private interview, or whether he meant that he was to imitate his example, or be conformed to him in the manner of his death, is very uncertain.

5. *If I will that he tarry till I come*—There are several opinions concerning this: The following are the principal: (1.) Some have concluded from these words, that John should never die. (2.) Others thought that our Lord intimated that John should live till Christ came to judge and destroy Jerusalem. Peter, who was the oldest of the apostles, died in the year 67, which was six years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and John survived the ruin of that city about thirty years, he being the only one of the twelve who was alive, when the above desolation took place. (3.) Others understood the passage thus "If I will that he remain till I come and take him away by a natural death, what is that to thee? follow thou me to thy crucifixion." On this it may be observed, that all antiquity agrees that John, if he did die, was the only disciple who was taken away by a natural death. (4.) Others imagine that our Lord was only now taking Peter aside to speak something to him in private, and that Peter, seeing John following, wished to know whether he should come along with them; and that our Lord's answer stated that John should remain in that place till Christ and Peter returned to him. I rather lean to the fourth opinion.

SECTION CCXXX.—CHRIST OPENS THE DISCIPLES' UNDERSTANDING.

A.D. 29.

LUKE XXIV. 44—49.

AND he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms,¹ concerning me. Then opened he their understanding,² that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins³ should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.⁴ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father⁵ upon you: But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

1. *In the law, and in the prophets, and in the psalms*—This was the Jewish division of the whole old covenant. The "law" contained the five books of Moses. The "prophets," the Jews divided into former and latter; they were, according to Josephus, thirteen. The "psalms" included not only the book still so named, but also three other books, Proverbs, Job, and Canticles.

2. *Then opened he their understanding*—"He fully opened." They had a measure of light before, so that they discerned the scriptures to be the true word of God, and to speak of the Messiah; but they had not light sufficient to enable them to apply these scriptures to their Lord and Master: But now, by the influence of Christ, they see, not only the prophecies which pointed out the Messiah, but also the Messiah who was pointed out by these prophecies. The book of God may be received, in general, as a divine revelation; but the proper meaning, reference, and application of the scriptures can only be discerned by the light of Christ. Even the very plain word of God is a dead letter to those who are not enlightened by the grace of Christ. And why? Because this word speaks of spiritual and heavenly things; and the carnal mind of man cannot discern them. They who receive not this inward teaching, continue dark and dead while they live.

3. *Remission of sins*—The taking away, removal of, sins; in general, every thing

that relates to the destruction of the power, the pardoning of the guilt, and the purification of the heart from the very nature, of sin: "In his name," on his authority, and in virtue of the atonement made by him; for on what other ground could the inhabitants of the earth expect remission of sins? "Among all nations;" because God wills the salvation of all, and Jesus Christ, by his grace, has tasted death for every man: "Beginning at Jerusalem;" making the first overtures of mercy to my murderers. If, then, the sinners of Jerusalem might repent, believe, and be saved, none on this side hell need despair.

"That God pardons sin, and receives us into favour, only through the death of Christ, is so fully expressed in the gospel, that it is not possible to doubt of it if one does firmly believe, and attentively read, the New Testament; nor is it less evident, that it is not offered to us absolutely and without conditions and limitations. These conditions are, 'repentance,' (with which 'remission of sins' is often joined,) and faith. Our faith and repentance are not the valuable considerations for which God pardons and justifies. That is done merely for the death of Christ; which God having out of the riches of his grace provided for us and offered to us, justification is upon those accounts to be 'free,' there being nothing on our part which either did or could have procured it. But still our faith is the condition that makes us capable of receiving

the benefits of this redemption and free-grace."—BISHOP BURNET.

4. *Ye are witnesses of these things*—He gave them a full commission to proclaim these glad tidings of peace and salvation to a lost world. The disciples were witnesses, not only that Christ had suffered and rose again from the dead, but also that he opens the understanding by the inspiration of his Spirit, that he gives repentance, that he pardons sin, and purifies from all unrighteousness, and that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto the knowledge of the truth, and be saved. And these are the things of which their successors in the gospel ministry must bear witness. As far as a man steadily and affectionately proclaims these doctrines, so far God will bless his labour to the salvation of those who hear him. But no man can, with any propriety, bear witness of that grace that saves the soul, whose own soul is not saved by that grace.

"Christ's resurrection being a matter of fact, must be proved by the testimony of eye-witnesses, who, if they be honest men, and such as suffer the greatest prejudices in fortune, reputation, and life, for this testimony, we have the greater reason to believe it; for their honesty must render them unwilling to testify a falsehood; their interest and prudence would not suffer

them, without any necessity laid upon them, to testify a lie, much more to testify the grossest falsehood to their utmost damage, and without any prospect of advantage. But, farther: If they confirm this testimony by all kinds of signs, miracles, and wondrous powers, exercised by themselves and others who embraced their testimony; if this was done in all places, on all kinds of persons, for a whole age, or ages, this renders it impossible they should thus attest a lie; and therefore Christ bids them stay at Jerusalem till they were thus empowered, by virtue from on high, to confirm this testimony."—WHITBY.

5. *The promise of my Father, &c.*—That is, the Holy Ghost. "Until ye be endued with power:" The energy of the Holy Ghost was to be communicated to them for three particular purposes: (1.) That he might be in them a sanctifying Comforter, fortifying their souls, and bringing to their remembrance whatever Jesus had before spoken to them. (2.) That their preaching might be accompanied by his demonstration and power to the hearts of their hearers, so that they might believe and be saved. (3.) That they might be able to work miracles to confirm their pretensions to a divine mission, and to establish the truth of the doctrines they preached.

SECTION CCXXXI.—CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

A. D. 29. MARK XVI. 15—19; ACTS I. 6—12; LUKE XXIV. 50—53.

WHEN they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And he led them out as far as to Bethany. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth¹ and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.² And these signs shall follow³ them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they

drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken these things unto them, he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, *and* while they beheld, he was parted from them, *and* taken up ; and a cloud received him out of their sight, and carried *him* up into heaven,⁴ and *he* sat on the right hand of God. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.⁵ And they worshipped him,⁶ and returned to Jerusalem with great joy⁷ from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey : And were continually in the temple,⁸ praising and blessing God. Amen.

1. *He that believeth*—He that credits this gospel as a revelation from God : “And is baptized,” takes upon him the profession of it, obliging himself to walk according to its precepts : “He shall be saved,” redeemed from sin here, and brought at last to the enjoyment of my eternal glory. “But he that believeth not shall be damned,” because he rejects the only provision that could be effectual to his soul's salvation. To say that “water baptism is nothing, because a baptism of the Spirit is promised,” is not correct. Baptism, howsoever administered, is a most important rite in the church of Christ. To say that “sprinkling or aspersion is no gospel baptism,” is as incorrect as to say immersion is none. Such assertions are as unchristian as they are uncharitable, and should be carefully avoided by all those who wish to promote the great design of the gospel,—glory to God, and peace and good-will among men. Lastly : To assert that “infant-baptism is unscriptural,” is as rash and reprehensible as any of the rest. Myriads of conscientious people choose to dedicate their infants to God, by public baptism. They are in the right ; and, by acting thus, follow the general practice both of the Jewish and Christian church ; a practice from which it is as needless as it is dangerous to depart.

2. *He that believeth not shall be damned*—“To know this is to know enough of the divine decrees. Those persons comport

themselves with the greatest modesty, with regard to the divine counsels, who, leaving with God those things which are secret, are chiefly solicitous to fulfil what is revealed by a strict performance of what the gospel requires.”—J. A. TURRETINE.

3. *These signs shall follow*—That the apostles of our Lord should not lose their lives by poison, is most fully asserted in this verse ; and there is neither record nor tradition to disprove this. But it is worthy of remark, that Mohammed, who styled himself “the apostle of God,” lost his life by poison ; and had he been a true apostle of God, he could not have fallen by it.

“Even at this day, in every believer, faith has a latent miraculous power ; every effect of prayer being really miraculous ; although in many, because of their littleness of faith, and because the world is unworthy, that power is not exerted. Miracles in the beginning were helps to faith ; now also they are the objects of it. At Leonberg, a town in Wirtemberg, in the memory of our fathers, a cripple that could hardly move with crutches, while the dean was preaching on this very text, was in a moment made whole.”—BENGEIUS.

4. *Carried him up into heaven*—Into that heaven from which he had descended. This was forty days after his resurrection, during which time he had given the most convincing proofs of that resurrection, not only to the apostles, but to many others ; to upwards of five hundred at one time.

As in his life they had seen the way to the kingdom, and in his death the price of the kingdom, so in his ascension they had the fullest proof of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the human body, and of his continual intercession at the right hand of God.

"As he ascended up into the skies, the flaming cloud which surrounded him, leaving a track of light behind it, marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of them who stood below, till, soaring high, he and it vanished out of their sight; for he was received up where the Deity manifests himself in a peculiar manner. 'And sat on the right hand of God;' that is, in his human nature was advanced in dignity next to the Divine Majesty; all power in heaven and earth being given him. And this universal government he will hold, till he fully establishes the dominion of righteousness, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all."—MACKNIGHT.

"Into his joy shall they be introduced, and his presence they shall never quit. He is the Sun of the world which shall be their joyous abode; and amidst the irradiations of his favour they shall for ever dwell. Who can tell what communications of blessedness he shall perpetually convey into their redeemed and purified spirits, or with what rich and boundless stores of knowledge he shall fill their expanded and ever-expanding capacities? Who can tell how he will unfold the glory of his attributes, or employ, in the promotion of that glory, the activities of their vigorous minds, and of their spiritual and immortal bodies?"—H. F. BURDER.

5. *The same Jesus shall so come as ye have seen him go into heaven*—"Then shall Christ appear visibly in some very conspicuous place, in the clouds of heaven, where every eye shall see him. He shall appear 'in his own glory,' that is, in his human glorified body. He shall appear 'in the glory of his angels,' having a vast number of these about him, attending upon him. But, what is above all, he shall appear 'in his Father's glory;' that is, there shall be then a most wonderful manifestation of the eternal Godhead dwelling in him: And then shall he pass a final

sentence upon all that ever lived upon earth, according to all that they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad. The righteous shall ascend as he did, and shall meet him in the clouds, and be for ever with him; and the wicked shall sink into a state of darkness and misery, of unspeakable horror of mind, and everlasting pain and torment."—BISHOP BURNET.

6. *They worshipped him*—Let it be observed, that this worship was not given by way of civil respect, for it was after he was parted from them, and carried back into heaven, that they offered it to him; but acts of civil respect are always performed in the presence of the person. They adored him as their God, and were certainly too much enlightened to be capable of any species of idolatry.

7. *Returned to Jerusalem with great joy*—Having the fullest proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah; and that they had a full commission to preach repentance and remission of sin to mankind, and that they should be divinely qualified for this great work by receiving the promise of the Father.

8. *Were continually in the temple*—Especially till the day of pentecost came, when they received the promise: "Praising and blessing God;" magnifying his mercy, and speaking good of his name. Thus the days of their mourning were ended; and they began that life upon earth in which they still live in the kingdom of God. May the God of infinite love give the reader the same portion in time and in eternity, through the same glorious and ever-blessed Jesus! Amen and amen.

It is evident, that, at the conclusion of this Gospel, St. Luke passes very rapidly over a number of interesting circumstances related by the other evangelists, and particularly by St. John, concerning the last forty days of our Lord's sojourning on earth; but, to compensate for this, he has mentioned a variety of important particulars which the others have passed by. It seems as if the providence of God had designed that none of these evangelists should stand alone; each has his peculiar excellence, and each his own style and mode of narration. They are all witnesses to the truth in general; and each most pointedly to every great fact of the gospel history.

In each there is something new; and no serious reader ever finds that the perusal of any one supersedes the necessity of carefully consulting and reading the others. The same facts and doctrines are exhibited by all in different points of view, which renders them both impressive and interesting; and this one circumstance serves to fix the narrative more firmly in the memory. We should have had lighter impressions from the gospel history, had we not had the narrative at four different hands. This variety is of great service to the church of God, and has contributed very much to diffuse the knowledge of the facts and doctrines contained in this history. Parallel passages have been carefully studied, and the different shades of meaning accurately marked out; and the consequence has been, what the wisdom of God designed, the fuller edification of the faithful. It is not the business of a commentator to point out beauties in the composition of the sacred text. Many might be selected from

the evangelists in general, and not a few from Luke, who not only tells a true story, but tells it well; especially when he has occasion to connect the different parts of the narration with observations of his own. But this is his least praise: From his own account we learn, that he took the utmost pains to get the most accurate and circumstantial information relative to the facts he was to relate. While, therefore, he thus diligently and conscientiously sought for truth, the unerring Spirit of God led him into all truth. Even he who expected the revelation of the Almighty, and to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, that he might correctly, forcibly, and successfully proclaim the truth and righteousness of his Maker, must stand upon his watch, and set himself upon his tower, and watch to see what God would speak in him. In a similar spirit we may expect the fruits of these revelations. He who carefully and conscientiously uses the means may expect the accomplishment of the end.

SECTION CCXXXII.—THE END FOR WHICH THE GOSPELS WERE WRITTEN.

A.D. 29.

MARK XVI. 20; JOHN XX. 30, 31; XXI. 25.

AND many other signs truly did Jesus¹ in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe² that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.³ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I [*John*] suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.⁴ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*,⁵ and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.⁶

1. *Many other signs truly did Jesus*—The other miracles which our Lord did, and which are not related here, were such as were necessary to the disciples only, and therefore not revealed to mankind at large. There is nothing in the whole revelation of God but what is for some important purpose; and there is nothing left out that could have been of any real use.

2. *That ye might believe*—What is here recorded is to give a full proof of the Divinity of Christ; that he is the promised Messiah; that he really suffered, and rose again from the dead; and that through him every believer might have eternal life.

“Enough, however, is recorded for practical uses; the rest are reserved to the revelations of a future state; when, under

other circumstances, they will have their practical uses too, though not fitted, or not necessary, for the present. Let us remember, that we are rather to improve what is recorded, than repine that not more has been written to gratify our curiosity. There is doubtless a kind wisdom in these reserves, as well as a sovereign authority, to which we are to submit. That which would now be a matter of mere curiosity, hidden from us, shows how intent our Saviour is upon our real edification. This short life is the time of action: Contemplation is reserved for eternity."—R. WATSON.

3. *Might have life through his name*—“This life, in all its stages, from its commencement to its consummation in glory, is obtained only through the name of our Saviour; that is to say, through his power, merit, and agency. This is that name in which the Gentiles were to trust. It comprehends all that faith can require in order to exert its strongest confidence; it is a name of power, and a name of love, as all his mighty works on earth then testified, and still testify to all succeeding ages. In all seasons, when, pressed by the weight of guilt, we penitently look to him for pardon; in sickness, sorrow, temptation, or any other adversity, when we fly to him for ‘grace to help in time of need;’ and when, even in the agonies of our mortal struggle, we fix our believing look upon Him who is the resurrection and the life, that ‘name to sinners dear,’ that ‘name to sinners given,’ shall scatter all our fears, and encourage us to look up with joyful confidence.”—R. WATSON.

4. *I suppose the world itself would not contain the books that should be written*—This is a very strong eastern expression, to represent the number of miracles which Jesus wrought.

“‘In speaking of Christ or of his kingdom,’ says one, ‘a man can scarcely express himself so largely as to utter an hyperbole.’ Much had St. John said of our Saviour, yet nothing to what he might have said: All that ever Christ did was divine, and deserved to be chronicled. That commendation which Paterculus falsely gives to Scipio,—‘that he never in all his life did, spoke, or thought any thing but what was praiseworthy,’—is true only of Christ.

That which the ecclesiastical historian (Sozomen) relates of Bennis,—‘that he was never seen or heard by any to swear, lie, or be rashly angry, to speak or to do any thing that becomed not God’s servant,’—is a praise proper to Christ, even as he was man. But consider him as God, and then that of Gratian the emperor is true, in his epistle to St. Ambrose: ‘We speak of God, not so much as we ought, but so much as we can. No one, to all eternity, can draw forth the immensity of God’s wisdom.’ He is indeed like the pool about which Polycrites writes, which in compass, at the first, seemed scarce to exceed the breadth of a shield; but if any went in to wash, it extended itself more and more. ‘The more that we receive of him, the more inexhaustible does he appear,’ saith Nazianzen. When, therefore, the apostle saith, that ‘the world itself would not contain the books that should be written,’ Augustine saith, ‘He does not speak here of the immense pile of books, nor of local capacity; but, as the Holy Spirit had regard to us, He selected those things to be written out for us which believers, in this their state of infirmity, might be able to comprehend.’” —JOHN TRAPP.

5. *The Lord working with them*—This co-operation was twofold, internal and external: Internal, illuminating their minds, convincing them of the truth, and establishing them in it: External, conveying their word to the souls that heard it, by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost; convincing them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; justifying them by his blood, and sanctifying them by his Spirit. Though miraculous powers are not now requisite, because the truth of the gospel has been sufficiently confirmed, yet this co-operation of God is indispensably necessary, without which no man can be a successful preacher; and without which no soul can be saved.

The Gospel according to Mark, if not an abridgment of the Gospel according to Matthew, contains a neat, perspicuous abridgment of the history of our Lord; and, taken in this point of view, is very satisfactory; and is the most proper of all the four Gospels to be put into the hands of young persons, in order to bring them to an acquaintance with the great facts of

evangelical history. But as a substitute for the Gospel by Matthew, it should never be used. It is very likely that it was written originally for the use of the Gentiles, and probably for those of Rome. Of this, there seem to be several evidences in the work itself. Of the other Gospels it is not only a grand corroborating evidence, but contains many valuable hints for completing the history of our Lord, which have been omitted by the others; and thus, in the mouths of four witnesses, all these glorious and interesting facts are established. The Gospel according to Mark is a very important portion of divine revelation, which God has preserved, by a chain of providences, from the time of its promulgation until now; and for which no truly

pious reader will hesitate to render due praise to that God whose work is ever perfect. Amen.

6. *Amen*—The word “amen,” which has passed unaltered into almost all the languages of the world in which the sacred writings are extant, is pure Hebrew; and signifies to be “steady, constant, firm, established,” or “confirmed.”

After reading the Gospel of John, his first Epistle should be next taken up: It is written exactly in the same spirit, and keeps the same object steadily in view. As John's Gospel may be considered a supplement to the other evangelists, so his first Epistle may be considered a supplement and continuation to his own Gospel.

THE END.

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