Introductory Lectures on the Gospels

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Matthew

Matthew 1 - 7.

God has been pleased, in the separate accounts He has given us of our Lord Jesus, to display not only His own grace and wisdom, but the infinite excellency of His Son. It is our wisdom to seek to profit by all the light He has afforded us; and, in order to this, both to receive implicitly, as the simple Christian surely does, whatever God has written for our instruction in these different gospels, and also by comparing them, and comparing them according to the special point of view which God has communicated in each gospel, to see concentrated the varying lines of everlasting truth which there meet in Christ. Now, I shall proceed with all simplicity, the Lord helping me, first taking up the gospel before us, in order to point out, as far as I am enabled to do, the great distinguishing features, as well as the chief contents, that the Holy Ghost has here been pleased to communicate. It is well to bear in mind, that in this gospel, as in all the rest, God has in nowise undertaken to present everything, but only some chosen discourses and facts; and this is the more remarkable, inasmuch as in some cases the very same miracles, etc., are given in several, and even in all, the gospels. The gospels are short; the materials used are not numerous; but what shall we say of the depths of grace that are there disclosed? What of the immeasurable glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which everywhere shines out in them?

The undeniable certainty that God has been pleased to confine Himself to a small portion of the circumstances of the life of Jesus, and, even so, to repeat the same

discourse. miracle, or whatever other fact is brought before us, only brings out, to my mind, more distinctly the manifest design of God to give expression to the glory of the Son in each gospel according to a special point of view. Now, looking at the gospel of Matthew as a whole, and taking the most enlarged view of it before we enter into details, the question arises, what is the main idea before the Holy Ghost? It is surely the lesson of simplicity to learn this from God, and, once learnt, to apply it steadily as a help of the most manifest kind; full of interest, as well as of the weightiest instruction, in examining all the incidents as they come before us. What, then, is that which, not merely in a few facts in particular chapters, but throughout, comes before us in the gospel of Matthew? It matters not where we look, whether at the beginning, the middle, or at the end, the same evident character proclaims itself. The prefatory words introduce it. Is it not the Lord Jesus, Son of David, Son of Abraham — Messiah? But, then, it is not simply the anointed of Jehovah, but One who proves Himself, and is declared of God, to be Jehovah-Messiah — No such testimony appears elsewhere. I say not that there is no evidence in the other gospels to demonstrate that He is really Jehovah and Emmanuel too, but that nowhere else have we the same fulness of proof, and the same manifest design, from the very starting point of the gospel, to proclaim the Lord Jesus as being thus a divine Messiah — God with us.

The practical object is equally obvious. The common notion, that the Jews are in view, is quite correct, as far as it goes. The gospel of Matthew bears internal proof that God specially provides for the instruction of His own among those that had been Jews. It was written

more particularly for leading Jewish Christians into a truer understanding of the glory of the Lord Jesus. Hence, every testimony that could convince and satisfy a Jew, that could correct or enlarge his thoughts, is found most fully here; hence the precision of the quotations from the Old Testament; hence the converging of prophecy on the Messiah; hence, too, the manner in which the miracles of Christ, or the incidents of His life, are here grouped together. To Jewish difficulties all this pointed with peculiar fitness. Miracles we have elsewhere, no doubt, and prophecies occasionally; but where is there such a profusion of them as in Matthew? Where, in the mind of the Spirit of God, such a continual, conspicuous point of quoting and applying Scripture in all places and seasons to the Lord Jesus? To me, I confess, it seems impossible for a simple mind to resist the conclusion.

But this is not all to be noticed here. Not only does God deign to meet the Jew with these proofs from prophecy, miracle, life, and doctrine, but He begins with what a Jew would and must demand — the question of genealogy. But even then the answer of Matthew is after a divine sort. "The book," he says, "of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." These are the two principal landmarks to which a Jew turns:- royalty given by the grace of God in the one, and the original depository of the promise in the other.

Moreover, not only does God condescend to notice the line of fathers, but, if He turns aside for a moment now and then for aught else, what instruction, both in man's sin and need, and in His own grace, does thus spring up before us from the mere course of His genealogical tree! He names in certain cases the mother, and not the father

only; but never without a divine reason. There are four women alluded to. They are not such as any of us, or perhaps any man, would beforehand have thought of introducing, and into such a genealogy, of all others. But God had His own sufficient motive; and His was one not only of wisdom, but of mercy; also, of special instruction to the Jew, as we shall see in a moment. First of all, who but God would have thought it necessary to remind us that Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar? I need not enlarge; these names in divine history must speak for themselves. Man would have hidden all this assuredly; he would have preferred to put forth either some flaming account of ancient and august ancestry, or to concentrate all the honour and glory in one, the lustre of whose genius eclipsed all antecedents. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts; neither are our ways His ways. Again, the allusion to such persons thus introduced is the more remarkable because others, worthy ones, are not named. There is no mention of Sarah, no hint of Rebecca, no notice whatever of so many holy and illustrious names in the female line of our Lord Jesus. But Thamar does appear thus early (v. 3); and so manifest is the reason, that one has no need to explain further. I am persuaded that the name one is sufficient intimation to any Christian heart and conscience. But how significant to the Jew! What were his thoughts of the Messiah? Would he have put forward the name of Thamar in such a connection? Never. He might not have been able to deny the fact; but as to bringing it out thus, and drawing special attention to it, the Jew was the last man to have done it. Nevertheless, the grace of God in this is exceeding good and wise.

But there is more than this. Lower down we have another. There is the name of Rachab, a Gentile, and a Gentile bringing no honourable reputation along with her. Men may seek to pare it down, but it is impossible either to cloak her shame, or to fritter away the grace of God. It is not to be well or wisely got rid of, who and what Rachab publicly was; yet is she the woman that the Holy Ghost singles out for the next place in the ancestry of Jesus.

Ruth, too, appears — Ruth, of all these women — most sweet and blameless, no doubt, by the working of the divine grace in her, but still a daughter of Moab, whom the Lord forbade to enter His congregation to the tenth generation for ever.

And what of Solomon himself, begotten by David, the king, of her that had been the wife of Uriah? How humiliating to those who stood on human righteousness! How thwarting to mere Jewish expectations of the Messiah! He was the Messiah, but such He was after God's heart, not man's. He was the Messiah that somehow would and could have relations with sinners, first and last; whose grace would reach and bless Gentiles — a Moabite — anybody. Room was left for intimations of such compass in Matthew's scheme of His ancestry. Deny it they might as to doctrine and fact now; they could not alter or efface the real features from the genealogy of the true Messiah; for in no other line but David's, through Solomon, could Messiah be. And God has deemed it meet to recount even this to us, so that we may know and enter into His own delight in His rich grace as He speaks of the ancestors of the Messiah. It is thus, then, we come down to the birth of Christ.

Nor was it less worthy of God that He should make most plain the truth of another remarkable conjuncture of predicted circumstances, seemingly beyond reconcilement, in His entrance into the world.

There were two conditions absolutely requisite for the Messiah: one was, that He should be truly born of a — rather of the — Virgin; the other was, that He should inherit the royal rights of the Solomon-branch of David's house, according to promise. There was a third too, we may add, that He who was the real son of His virgin-mother, the legal son of His Solomon-sprung father, should be, in the truest and highest sense, the Jehovah of Israel, Emmanuel — God with us. All this is crowded into the brief account next given us in Matthew's gospel, and by Matthew alone. Accordingly, "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." This latter truth, that is, of the Holy Ghost's action as to it, we shall find, has a still deeper and wider import assigned to it in the gospel of Luke, whose office is to show us the Man Christ Jesus. I therefore reserve any observations that this larger scope might and ought, indeed, to give rise to, till we have to consider the third gospel But here the great thing is the relationship of Joseph to the Messiah, and hence he is the one to whom the angel appears. In the gospel of Luke it is not to Joseph, but to Mary. Are we to think that this variety of account is a mere accidental circumstance? or that if God has thus been pleased to draw out two distinct lines of truth, we are not to gather up the divine principle of each and all? It is impossible that God could do what even we should be ashamed of. If we act and speak, or forbear to do either,

we ought to have a sufficient reason for one or other. And if no man of sense doubts that this should be so in our own case, has not God always had His own perfect mind in the various accounts He has given us of Christ? Both are true, but with distinct design. It is with divine wisdom that Matthew mentions the angel's visit to Joseph; with no less direction from on high does Luke relate Gabriel's visit to Mary (as before to Zacharias); and the reason is plain. In Matthew, while he not in the least degree weakens, but proves the fact that Mary was the real mother of our Lord, the point was, that He inherited the rights of Joseph.

And no wonder; for no matter how truly our Lord had been the Son of Mary, He had not thereby an indisputable legal right to the throne of David. This never could be in virtue of His descent from Mary, unless He had also inherited the title of the royal stem. As Joseph belonged to the Solomon-branch, he would have barred the right of our Lord to the throne, looking at it as a mere question now of His being the Son of David; and we are entitled so to take it. His being God, or Jehovah, was in no way of itself the ground of Davidical claim, though otherwise of infinitely deeper moment. The question was to make good, along with His eternal glory, a Messianic title that could not be set aside, a title that no Jew on his own ground could impeach. It was His grace so to stoop; it was His own all-sufficient wisdom that knew how to reconcile conditions so above man to put together. God speaks, and it is done.

Accordingly, in the gospel of Matthew, the Spirit of God fixes our attention upon these facts. Joseph was the descendant of David, the king, through Solomon: the

Messiah must therefore, somehow or other, be the son of Joseph; yet had He really been the son of Joseph, all would have been lost. Thus the contradictions looked hopeless; for it seemed, that in order to be the Messiah, He must, and yet He must not, be Joseph's son. But what are difficulties to God? With Him all things are possible; and faith receives all with assurance. He was not only the son of Joseph, so that no Jew could deny it, and yet not so, but that He could be in the fullest manner the Son of Mary, the Seed of the woman, and not literally of the man. God, therefore, takes particular pains, in this Jewish gospel, to give all importance to His being strictly, in the eye of the law, the son of Joseph; and so, according to the flesh, inheriting the rights of the regal branch; yet here He takes particular care to prove that He was not, in the reality of His birth as man, Joseph's son. Before husband and wife came together, the espoused Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Such was the character of the conception. Besides, He was Jehovah. This comes out in His very name. The Virgin's Son was to be called "Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." He shall not be a mere man, no matter how miraculously born; Jehovah's people, Israel, are His; He shall save His people from their sins.

This is yet more revealed to us by the prophecy of Isaiah cited next, and particularly by the application of that name found nowhere else but in Matthew: "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Verses 22, 23.)

This, then, is the introduction and the great foundation in fact. The genealogy is, no doubt, formed peculiarly according to the Jewish manner; but this very shape serves rather as a confirmation, I will not say to the

Jewish mind alone, but to every honest man of intelligence. The spiritual mind, of course, has no difficulty — can have none by the very fact that it is spiritual, because its confidence is in God. Now there is nothing that so summarily banishes a doubt, and silences every question of the natural man, as the simple but happy assurance that what God says must be true, and is the only right thing. No doubt God has been pleased in this genealogy to do that which men in modern times have cavilled at; but not even the darkest and most hostile Jews raised such objections in former days. Assuredly they were the persons, above all, to have exposed the character of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, if vulnerable. But no; this was reserved for Gentiles. They have made the notable discovery that there is an omission! Now in such lists an omission is perfectly in analogy with the manner of the Old Testament. All that was demanded in such a genealogy was to give adequate landmarks so as to make the descent clear and unquestionable.

Thus, if you take Ezra, for instance, giving his own genealogy as a priest, you find that he omits not three links only in a chain, but seven. Doubtless there may have been a special reason for the omission; but whatever may be our judgment of the true solution of the difficulty, it is evident that a priest who was giving his own genealogy would not put it forward in a defective form. If in one who was of that sacerdotal succession where the proofs were rigorously required, where a defect in it would destroy his right to the exercise of spiritual functions — if in such a case there might legitimately be an omission, clearly there might be the same in regard to the Lord's genealogy; and the

more, as this omission was not in the part of which the Scripture speaks nothing, but in the centre of its historical records, whence the merest child could supply the missing links at once. Evidently, therefore, the omission was not careless or ignorant, but intentional. I doubt not myself that the design was thereby to intimate the solemn sentence of God on the connection with Athaliah of the wicked house of Ahab, the wife of Joram. (Compare verse 8 with 2 Chron. 22 - 26.) Ahaziah vanishes, and Joash, and Amaziah, when the line once more reappears here in Uzziah. These generations God blots out along with that wicked woman.

There was literally another reason lying on the surface, that required certain names to drop out. The Spirit of God was pleased to give, in each of the three divisions of the Messiah's genealogy, fourteen generations, as from Abraham down to David, from David to the captivity, and from the captivity to Christ. Now, it is evident, that if there were in fact more links in each chain of generation than these fourteen, all above that number must be omitted. Then, as we have just seen, the omission is not haphazard, but made of special moral force. Thus, if there was a necessity because the Spirit of God limited Himself to a certain number of generations, there was also divine reason, as there always is in the word of God, for the choice of the names which had to be omitted, However this may be, we have in this chapter, besides the genealogical line, the person of the long-expected son of David; we have Him introduced precisely, officially, and fully as the Messiah; we have His deeper glory, not merely that which He took but who He was and is. He might be styled, as indeed He was, "the son of David, the son of Abraham;" but He was, He is, He could

not but be, Jehovah-Emmanuel. How all-important this was for a Jew to believe and confess, one need hardly stop to expound: it is enough to mention it by the way. Evidently Jewish unbelief, even where there was an acknowledgment of the Messiah, turned upon this, that the Jew looked upon the Messiah purely according to what He deigns to become as the great King. They saw not any deeper glory than His Messianic throne, not more than an offshoot, though no doubt one of extraordinary vigour, from the root of David. Here, at the very starting-point, the Holy Ghost points out the divine and eternal glory of Him who deigns to come as the Messiah. Surely, too, if Jehovah condescended to be Messiah, and in order to this to be born of the Virgin, there must be some most worthy aims infinitely deeper than the intention, however great, to sit upon the throne of David. Evidently, therefore, the simple perception of the glory of His person overturns all conclusions of Jewish unbelief; shows us that He whose glory was so bright must have a work commensurate with that glory; that He whose personal dignity was beyond all time and even thought, who thus stoops to enter the ranks of Israel as Son of David, must have had some ends in coming, and, above all, to die, suitable to such glory. All this, it is plain, was of the deepest possible moment for Israel to apprehend. It was precisely what the believing Israelite did learn; even as it was just the rock of offence on which unbelieving Israel fell and was dashed to pieces.

The next chapter (Matt. 2) shows us another characteristic fact in reference to this gospel; for if the aim of the first chapter was to give us proofs of the true glory and character of the Messiah, in contrast with

mere Jewish limitation and unbelief about Him, the second chapter shows us what reception Messiah would find, in contrast with the wise men from the East, from Jerusalem, from the king and the people, and in the land of Israel. If His descent be sure as the royal son of David, if His glory be above all human lineage, what was the place that He found, in fact, in His land and people? Indefeasible was His title: what were the circumstances that met Him when He was found at length in Israel? The answer is, from the very first He was the rejected Messiah. He was rejected, and most emphatically, by those whose responsibility it was most of all to receive Him. It was not the ignorant; it was not those that were besotted in gross habits; it was Jerusalem — it was the scribes and Pharisees. The people, too, were all moved at the very thought of Messiah's birth.

What brought out the unbelief of Israel so distressingly was this — God would have a due testimony to such a Messiah; and if the Jews were unready, He would gather from the very ends of the earth some hearts to welcome Jesus — Jesus-Jehovah, the Messiah of Israel. Hence it is that Gentiles are seen coming forth from the East, led by the star which had a voice for their hearts. There had ever rested traditionally among Oriental nations, though not confined to them, the general bearing of Balaam's prophecy, that a star should arise, a star connected with Jacob. I doubt not that God was pleased in His goodness to give a seal to that prophecy, after a literal sort, not to speak of its true symbolic force. In His condescending love, He would lead hearts that were prepared of Him to desire the Messiah, and come from the ends of the earth to welcome Him. And so it was. They saw the star; they set forth to seek the Messiah's kingdom. It was not that

the star moved along the way; it roused them and set them going. They recognized the phenomenon as looking for the star of Jacob; they instinctively, I may say, certainly by the good hand of God, connected the two together. From their distant home they made for Jerusalem; for even the universal expectation of men at the time pointed to that city. But when they reached it, where were faithful souls awaiting the Messiah? They found active minds — not a few that could tell them clearly where the Messiah was to be born: for this God made them dependent upon His word. When they came to Jerusalem, it was not any longer an outward sign to guide. They learnt the scriptures as to it. They learnt from those that cared neither for it nor for Him it concerned, but who, nevertheless, knew the letter more or less. On the road to Bethlehem, to their exceeding joy, the star re-appears, confirming what they had received, till it rested over where the young child was. And there, in the presence of the father and the mother, they, Easterns though they were, and accustomed to no small homage, proved how truly they were guided of God; for neither father nor mother received the smallest of their worship: all was reserved for Jesus — all poured out at the feet of the infant Messiah. Oh, what a withering refutation of the foolish men of the West! Oh, what a lesson, even from these dark Gentiles, to self-complacent Christendom in East or West! Spite of what men might look down upon in these proud days, their hearts in their simplicity were true. It was but for Jesus they came; it was on Jesus that their worship was spent; and so, spite of the parents being there, spite of what nature would prompt them to do, in sharing, at least, something of the worship on the father and mother with

the Babe, they produced their treasures and worshipped the young child alone.

This is the more remarkable, because in the gospel of Luke we have another scene, where we see that same Jesus, truly an infant of days, in the hands of an aged one with far more divine intelligence than these Eastern sages could boast. Now we know what would have been the prompting of affection and of godly desires in the presence of a babe; but the aged Simeon never pretends to bless Him. Nothing would have been more simple and natural, had not that Babe differed from all others, had He not been what He was, and had Simeon not known who He was. But he did know it. He saw in Him the salvation of God; and so, though he could rejoice in God, and bless God, though he could in another sense bless the parents, he never presumes so to bless the Babe. It was indeed the blessing that he had got from that Babe which enabled him to bless both God and His parents; but he blesses not the Babe even when he blesses the parents. It was God Himself, even the Son of the Highest that was there, and his soul bowed before God. We have here, then, the Eastems worshipping the Babe, not the parents; as in the other case we have the blessed man of God blessing the patents, but not the Babe: a most striking token of the remarkable difference which the Holy Ghost had in view when inditing these histories of the Lord Jesus.

Further, to these Easterns intimation is given of God, and they returned another way, thus defeating the design of the treacherous heart and cruel head of the Edomite king, notwithstanding the slaughter of the innocents.

Next comes a remarkable prophecy of Christ, of which we must say a word — the prophecy of Hosea. Our Lord is carried outside the reach of the storm into Egypt. Such indeed was the history of His life; it was continual pain, one course of suffering and shame. There was no mere heroism in the Lord Jesus, but the very reverse. Nevertheless, it was God shrouding His Majesty; it was God in the person of man, in the Child that takes the lowliest place in the haughty world. Therefore, we find no more a cloud that covers Him, no pillar of fire that shields Him. Apparently the most exposed, He bows before the storm, retires, carried by His parents into the ancient furnace of affliction for His people. Thus even from the very first our Lord Jesus, as a babe, tastes the hate of the world — what it is to be thoroughly humbled, even as a child. The prophecy, therefore, was accomplished, and in its deepest meaning. It was not merely Israel that God called out, but His Son out of Egypt. Here was the true, Israel; Jesus was the genuine stock before God. He goes through, in His own person, Israel's history. He goes into Egypt, and is called out of it.

Returning, in due time, to the land of Israel at the death of him that reigned after Herod the Great, His parents are instructed as we are told, and turn aside into the parts of Galilee. This is another important truth; for thus was to be fulfilled the word, not of one prophet, but of all — "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." It was the name of man's scorn; for Nazareth was the most despised place in that despised land of Galilee. Such, in the providence of God, was the place for Jesus. This gave an accomplishment to the general voice of the

prophets, who declared Him despised and rejected of men. So He was. It was true even of the place in which He lived, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

We enter now upon the announcement of John the Baptist. (Matt. 3) The Spirit of God carries us over a long interval, and the voice of John is heard proclaiming, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Here we have an expression which must not be passed over — all-important as it is for the understanding of the gospel of Matthew. John the Baptist preached the nearness of this kingdom in the wilderness of Judaea. It was clearly gathered from the Old Testament prophecy, particularly from Daniel, that. the God of heaven would set up a kingdom; and more than this, that the Son of man was the person to administer the kingdom. "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Such was the kingdom of heaven. It was not a mere kingdom of the earth, neither was it in heaven, but it was heaven governing the earth for ever.

It would appear that, in John the Baptist's preaching it, we have no ground for supposing that either he believed at this time, or that any other men till afterwards were led into the understanding of the form which it was to assume through Christ's rejection and going on high as now. This our Lord divulged more particularly in Matthew 13. I understand, then, by this expression, what might be gathered justly from Old Testament prophecies; and that John, at this time, had no other thought but that the kingdom was about to be

introduced according to expectations thus formed. They had long looked for the time when the earth should no longer be left to itself, but heaven should be the governing power; when the Son of man should control the earth; when the power of hell should be banished from the world; when the earth should be put into association with the heavens, and the heavens, of course, therefore, be changed, so as to govern the earth directly through the Son of man, who should be also King of restored Israel. This, substantially, I think, was in the mind of the Baptist.

But then he proclaims repentance; not here in view of deeper things, as in the gospel of Luke, but as a spiritual preparation for Messiah and the kingdom of heaven. That is, he calls man to confess his own ruin in view of the introduction of that kingdom. Accordingly, his own life was the witness of what he felt morally of Israel's then state. He retires into the wilderness, and applies to himself the ancient oracle of Isaiah — "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." The reality was coming: as for him, he was merely one to announce the advent of the King. All Jerusalem was moved, and multitudes were baptized by him in Jordan. This gives occasion to his stern sentence upon their condition in the sight of God.

But among the crowd of those who came to him was Jesus. Strange sight! He, even He, Emmanuel, Jehovah, if He took the place of Messiah, would take that place in lowliness on the earth. For all things were out of course; and He must prove by His whole life, as we shall find by-and-by He did, what the condition of His people was. But, indeed, it is but another step of the same infinite grace, and more than that, of the same moral judgment on Israel; but along with it the added and most sweet

feature — His association with an in Israel who felt and owned their condition in the sight of God. It is what no saint can afford lightly to pass over; it is what, if a saint recognize not, he will understand the Scripture most imperfectly; nay, I believe he must grievously misunderstand the ways of God. But Jesus looked at those who came to the waters of Jordan, and saw their hearts touched, if ever so little, with a sense of their state before God; and His heart was truly with them. It is not now taking the people out of Israel, and bringing them into a position with Himself — that we shall find by-and-by; but it is the Saviour identifying Himself with the godly-feeling remnant. Wherever there was the least action of the Holy Spirit of God in grace in the hearts of Israel, He joined Himself. John was astonished; John the Baptist himself would have refused, but, "Thus," said the Saviour, "it becometh us" — including, as I apprehend, John with Himself. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

It is not here a question of law; it was too late for this — ever a ruinous thing for the sinner. It was a question of another sort of righteousness. It might be the feeblest recognition of God and man; it might be but a remnant of Israelites; but, at least, they owned the truth about themselves; and Jesus was with them in owning the ruin fully, and felt it all. No need was in Himself — not a particle; but it is precisely when the heart is thus perfectly free, and infinitely above ruin, that it can most of all descend and take up what is of God in the hearts of any. So Jesus ever did, and did it thus publicly, joining Himself with whatever was excellent on the earth. He was baptized in Jordan — an act most inexplicable for those who then or now might hold to His glory without

entering into His heart of grace. To what painful feelings it might give rise! Had He anything to confess? Without a single flaw of His own He bent down to confess what was in others; He owned in all its extent, in its reality as none did, the state of Israel, before God and man; He joined Himself with those who felt it. But at once, as the answer to any and every unholy misapprehension that could be formed, heaven is opened, and a twofold testimony is rendered to Jesus. The Father's voice pronounces the Son's relationship, and His own complacency; while the Holy Ghost anoints Him as man. Thus, in His full personality, God's answer is given to all who might otherwise have slighted either Himself or His baptism.

The Lord Jesus thence goes forth into another scene — the wilderness — to be tempted of the devil; and this, mark, now that He is thus publicly owned by the Father, and the Holy Ghost had descended on Him. It is indeed, I might say, when souls are thus blessed that Satan's temptations are apt to come. Grace provokes the enemy. Only in a measure, of course, can we thus speak of any other than Jesus; but of Him who was full of grace and truth, in whom, too, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt — even so, of Him it was fully true. The principle, at least, applies in every case. He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be there tried of the devil. The Holy Spirit has given the temptation to us in Matthew, according to the order in which it occurred. But here, as elsewhere, the aim is dispensational, not historical, as far as intention goes, though really so in point of fact; and I apprehend, specially with this in view, that it is only at the last temptation our Lord says, "Get thee hence, Satan." We shall see by and by why this

disappears in the gospel of Luke. There is thus the lesson of wisdom and patience even before the enemy; the excellent, matchless grace of patience in trial; for what more likely to exclude it than the apprehension that it was Satan all the while? But yet our Saviour was so perfect in it, that He never uttered the word "Satan" until the last daring, shameless effort to tempt Him to render to the evil one the very worship of God Himself Not till then does our Lord say, "Get thee hence, Satan."

We shall dwell a little more upon the three temptations, if the Lord will, as to their intrinsic moral import, when we come to the consideration of Luke. I content myself now with giving what appears to me the true reason why the Spirit of God here adheres to the order of the facts. It is well, however, to remark, that the departure from such an order is precisely what indicates the consummate hand of God, and for a simple reason. To one who knew the facts in a human way, nothing would he more natural than to put them down just as they occurred. To depart from the historical order, more particularly when one had previously given them that order, is what never would be thought of, unless there were some mighty preponderant reason in the mind of him who did so. But this is no uncommon thing. There are cases where an author necessarily departs from the mere order in which the facts took place. Supposing you are describing a certain character; you put together striking traits from the whole course of his life; you do not restrain yourself to the bare dates at which they occurred. If you were only chronicling the events of a year, you keep to the order in which they happened; but whenever you rise to the higher task of bringing out moral features, you may be frequently obliged to

abandon the consecutive order of events as they occurred.

It is precisely this reason that accounts for the change in Luke; who, as we shall find when we come to look at his gospel more carefully, is especially the moralist. That is to say, Luke characteristically looks upon things in their springs as well as effects. It is not his province to regard the person of Christ peculiarly, i.e., His divine glory; neither does he occupy himself with the testimony or service of Jesus here below, of which we all know Mark is the exponent. Neither is it true, that the reason why Matthew occasionally gives the order of time, is because such is always his rule. On the contrary, there is no one of the Gospel writers who departs from that order, when his subject demands it, more freely than he, as I hope to prove to the satisfaction of those open to conviction, before we close. If this be so, assuredly there must be some key to these phenomena, some reason sufficient to explain why sometimes Matthew adheres to the order of events, why he departs from it elsewhere.

I believe the real state of the facts to be this:- first of all, God has been pleased, by one of the evangelists (Mark), to give us the exact historical order of our Lord's eventful ministry. This alone would have been very insufficient to set forth Christ. Hence, besides that order, which is the most elementary, however important in its own place, other presentations of His life were due, according to various spiritual grounds, as divine wisdom saw fit, and as even we are capable of appreciating in our measure. Accordingly, I think it was owing to special considerations of this sort that Matthew was led to reserve for us the great lesson, that our Lord had passed through the entire temptation — not only the

forty days, but even that which crowned them at the close; and that only when an open blow was struck at the divine glory did His soul at once resent it with the words, "Get thee hence, Satan." Luke, on the contrary, inasmuch as he, for perfectly good and divinely given reason, changes the order, necessarily omits these words. Of course, I do not deny that similar words appear in your common English Bibles (in Luke 4:8); but no scholar needs to be informed that all such words are left out of the third gospel by the best authorities, followed by almost every critic of note, save the testy Matthaei, though scarce one of them seems to have understood the true reason why. Nevertheless, they are omitted by Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists; by High Church, and Low Church; by Evangelicals, Tractarians, and Rationalists. It does not matter who they are, or what their system of thought may be: all those who go upon the ground of external testimony alone are obliged to leave out the words in Luke. Besides, there is the clearest and the strongest evidence internally for the omission of these words in Luke, contrary to the prejudices of the copyists, which thus furnishes a very cogent illustration of the action of the Holy Spirit in inspiration. The ground of omitting the words lies in the fact, that the last temptation occupies the second place in Luke. If the words be retained, Satan seems to hold his ground, and renew the temptation after the Lord had told him to retire. Again, it is evident that, as the text stands in the received Greek text and our common English Bible, "Get thee behind me, Satan," is another mistake. In Matt. 4:10, it is, rightly, "Get thee hence." Remember, I am not imputing a shade of error to the Word of God. The mistake spoken of lies only in blundering scribes, critics, or translators, who have

failed in doing justice to that particular place. "Get thee hence, Satan," was the real language of the Lord to Satan, and is so given in closing the literally last temptation by Matthew.

When it was a question, at a later day, of His servant Peter, who, prompted by Satan, had fallen into human thoughts, and would have dissuaded his Master from the cross, He does say, "Get thee behind me." For certainly Christ did not want Peter to go away from Him and be lost, which would have been its effect. "Get thee [not hence, but] behind me," He says. He rebuked His follower, yea, was ashamed of him; and He desired that Peter should be ashamed of himself. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was thus appropriate language then. Satan was the source of the thought couched in Peter's words.

But when Jesus speaks to him whose last trial thoroughly betrays the adversary of God and man, i.e., the literal Satan, His answer is not merely, "Get thee behind me," but, "Get thee hence, Satan." Nor is this the only mistake, as we have seen, in the passage as given in the authorised version; for the whole clause should disappear from the account in Luke, according to the weightiest testimony. Besides, the reason is manifest. As it stands now, the passage wears this most awkward appearance, that Satan, though commanded to depart, lingers on. For in Luke we have another temptation after this; and of course, therefore, Satan must be presented as abiding, not as gone away.

The truth of the matter, then, is, that with matchless wisdom Luke was inspired of God to put the second temptation last, and the third temptation in the second place. Hence (inasmuch as these words of the third trial

would be wholly incongruous in such an inversion of the historic order), they are omitted by him, but preserved by Matthew, who here held to that order. I dwell upon this, because it exemplifies, in a simple but striking manner, the finger and mind of God; as it shows us, also, how the copyists of the scriptures fell into error, through proceeding on the principle of the harmonists, whose great idea is to make all the four gospels practically one Gospel. that is, to fuse them together into one mass, and make them give out only, as it were, a single voice in the praise of Jesus. Not so; there are four distinct voices blending in the truest harmony, and surely God Himself in each one, and equally in all, but, withal, showing out fully and distinctively the excellencies of His Son. It is the disposition to blot out these differences, which has wrought such exceeding mischief, not merely in copyists, but in our own careless reading of the gospels. What we need is, to gather up all, for all is worthy; to delight ourselves in every thought that the Spirit of God has treasured up — every fragrance, so to speak, that He has preserved for us of the ways of Jesus.

Turning, then, from the temptation (which we may hope to resume in another point of view, when the gospel of Luke comes before us and we shall have the different temptations on the moral side, with their changed order), I may in passing notice, that a very characteristic difference in the gospel of Matthew meets us in what follows. Our Lord enters upon His public ministry as a minister of the circumcision, and calls disciples to follow Him. It was not His first acquaintance with Simon, Andrew, and the rest, as we know from the gospel of John. They had before known Jesus, and, I apprehend, savingly. They are now called to be His companions in

Israel, formed according to His heart as His servants here below; but before this we have a remarkable Scripture applied to our Lord. He changes his place of sojourn from Nazareth to Capernaum. And this is the more observable, because, in the Gospel of Luke, the first opening of His ministry is expressly at Nazareth; while the point of emphasis in Matthew is, that He leaves Nazareth, and comes and dwells in Capernaum. Of course, both are equally true; but who can say that they are the same thing? or that the Spirit of God had not His own blessed reasons for giving prominency to both facts? Nor is the reason obscure. His going to Capernaum was the accomplishment of the word of Isaiah 9, specifically mentioned for the instruction of the Jew, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, "The land of Zebulun, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." That quarter of the land was regarded as the scene of darkness; yet was it just there that God suddenly caused light to arise. Nazareth was in lower, as Capernaum was in upper Galilee. But more than this, it was the seat, above all others in the land, frequented by Gentiles — Galilee ("the circuit") of the Gentiles. Now, we shall find throughout this gospel that which may be well stated here, and will be abundantly confirmed everywhere — that the object of our gospel is not merely to prove what the Messiah was, both according to the flesh and according to His own divine intrinsic nature, for Israel; but also, when rejected by Israel, what the consequences of that rejection would be for the Gentiles, and this in a double aspect — whether as

introducing the kingdom of heaven in a new form, or as giving occasion for Christ's building His Church. These were the two main consequences of the rejection of the Messiah by Israel.

Accordingly, as in chapter it we found Gentiles from the East coming up to own the born King of the Jews, when His people were buried in bondage and Rabbinic tradition — in heartless heedlessness, too, while boasting of their privileges; so here our Lord, at the beginning of His public ministry, as recorded in Matthew, is seen taking up His abode in these despised districts of the north, the way of the sea, where especially Gentiles had long dwelt, and on which the Jews looked down as a rude and dark spot, far from the centre of religious sanctity. There, according to prophecy, light was to spring up; and how brightly was it now accomplished? Next, we have the call of the disciples, as we have seen. At the end of the chapter is a general summary of the Messiah's ministry, and of its effects, given in these words: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, 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, 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 Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." This I read, in order to show that it is the purpose of the Spirit, in this part of our gospel, to gather a quantity of facts together under

one head, entirely regardless of the question of time. It is evident, that what is here described in a few verses must have demanded a considerable space for its accomplishment. The Holy Ghost gives it all to us as a connected whole.

The self-same principle applies to the so-called sermon on the mount, on which I am about to say a few words. It is quite a misapprehension to suppose that Matt. 5 - 7 was given all in a single, unbroken discourse. For the wisest purposes, I have no doubt, the Spirit of God has arranged and conveyed it to us as one whole, without notice of the interruptions, occasions, etc.; but it is an unwarrantable conclusion for any to draw, that our Lord Jesus delivered it simply and solely as it stands in Matthew's gospel. What proves the fact is, that in the gospel of Luke we have certain portions of it clearly pertaining to this very sermon (not merely similar, or the same truth preached at other times, but this identical discourse), with the particular circumstances which drew them out. Take the prayer, for instance, that was here set before the disciples. (Matt. 6) As to this, we know from Luke 11 there was a request preferred by the disciples which led to it. As to other instruction, there were facts or questions, found in Luke, which drew out the remarks of the Lord, common to him and Matthew, if not Mark.

If it be certain that the Holy Ghost has been pleased to give us in Matthew this discourse and others as a whole, leaving out the originating circumstances found elsewhere, it is a fair and interesting inquiry why such a method of grouping with such omissions is adopted. The answer I conceive to be this, — that the Spirit in Matthew loves to present Christ as the One like unto

Moses, whom they were to hear. He presents Jesus not merely as a legislating prophet-king like Moses, but greater by far; for it is never forgotten that the Nazarene was the Lord God. Therefore it is that, in this discourse on the mountain, we have throughout the tone of One who was consciously God with men. If Jehovah called Moses up to the top of one mount) He who then spake the ten words sat now upon another mount, and taught His disciples the character of the kingdom of heaven, and its principles introduced as a whole, just answering to what we have seen of the facts and effects of His ministry, entirely passing by all intervals or connecting circumstances. As we had His miracles all put together, as I may say, in the gross, so with His discourses. We have thus in either case the same principle. The substantial truth is given to us without noticing the immediate occasion in particular facts, appeals, etc. What was uttered by the Lord, according to Matthew, is thus presented as a whole. The effect, therefore, is, that it is much more solemn, because unbroken, carrying its own majesty along with it. The Spirit of God imprints on it purposely this character here, as I have no doubt there was an intention that it should be so reproduced for the instruction of His own people.

The Lord, in short, was here accomplishing one of the parts of His mission according to Isaiah 53, where the work of Christ is twofold. It is not, as the authorized version has it, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;" for it is unquestionable that justification is not by His knowledge. Justification is by faith of Christ, we know; and as far as the efficacious work on which it depends is concerned, it is clearly in

virtue of what Christ has suffered for sin and sins before God. But I apprehend that the real force of the passage is, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness." It is not "justify" in the ordinary forensic sense of the word, but rather instructing in righteousness, as the context here requires, and as the usage of the word elsewhere, as in Dan. 12, leaves open. This seems to be what is meant of our Lord here.

In the teaching on the mount He was, in fact, instructing the disciples in righteousness: hence, too, one reason why we have not a word about redemption. There is not the slightest reference to His suffering on the cross; no intimation of His blood, death, or resurrection: He is instructing though not merely in righteousness. To the heirs of the kingdom the Lord is unfolding the principles of that kingdom — most blessed and rich instruction, but instruction in righteousness. No doubt there is also the declaration of the Father's name, as far as could be then; but, still, the form taken is that of "instructing in righteousness." Let me add, as to the passage of Isa. 53, that the remainder of the verse also accords with this: not "for," but, "and He shall bear their iniquities." Such is the true force of it. The one was in His life, when He taught His own; the other was in His death, when He bore the iniquities of many.

Into the details of the discourse on the mount I cannot enter particularly now, but would just say a few words before I conclude tonight. In its preface we have a method often adopted by the Spirit of God, and not unworthy of our study. There is no child of God that cannot glean blessing from it, even through a scanty glance; but when we look into it a little more closely, the

instruction deepens immensely. First of all He pronounces certain classes blessed. These blessednesses divide into two classes. The earlier character of blessedness savours particularly of righteousness, the later of mercy, which are the two great topics of the Psalms. These are both taken up here: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." In the fourth case righteousness comes in expressly, and closes that part of the subject; but it is plain enough that all these four classes consist in substance of such as the Lord pronounces blessed, because they are righteous in one form or another. The next three are founded upon mercy. Hence we read as the very first — "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Of course, it would be impossible to attempt more than a sketch at this time. Here, then, occurs the number usual in all these systematic partitions of Scripture; there is the customary and complete seven of Scripture. The two supplementary blessednesses at the end rather confirm the case, though at first sight they might appear to offer an exception. But it is not so really. The exception proves the rule convincingly; for in verse 10 you have, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" which answers to the first four. Then, in verses 11 and 12, you have, "Blessed are ye..... for my sake;" which answers to the higher mercy of the last three. "Blessed are ye, [there is thus a change. It is made a direct personal address] when men shall revile

you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Thus it is the very consummation of suffering in grace, because it is for Christ's sake.

Hence the twofold persecutions (10-12) bring in the double character we find in the epistles — suffering for righteousness' sake, and suffering for Christ's sake. These are two perfectly distinct things; because, where it is a question of righteousness, it is simply a person brought to a point. If I do not stand and suffer here, my conscience will be defiled; but this is in no way suffering for Christ's sake. In short, conscience enters where righteousness is the question; but suffering for Christ's sake is not a question of plain sin, but of His grace and its claims on my heart. Desire for His truth, desire for His glory, carries me out into a certain path that exposes me to suffering. I might merely do my duty in the place in which I am put; but grace is never satisfied with the bare performance of one's duty. Fully is it admitted that there is nothing like grace to meet duty; and doing one's duty is a good thing for a Christian. But God forbid that we should be merely shut up to duty, and not be free for the flowing over of grace which carries out the heart alone, with it. In the one case, the believer stops dead short: if he did not stand, there would be sin. In the other case, there would be a lack of testimony for Christ, and grace makes one rejoice to be counted worthy of suffering for His name: but righteousness is not in question.

Such, then, are the two distinct classes or groups of blessedness. First, there are the blessednesses of righteousness, to which the persecution for righteousness' sake pertains; next, the blessednesses of

mercy or grace. Christ instructs in righteousness according to prophecy, but He does not confine Himself to righteousness. This never could be consistent with the glory of the person who was there. Accordingly, therefore, while there is the doctrine of righteousness, there is the introduction of what is above it and mightier than it, with the corresponding blessedness of being persecuted for Christ's sake. All here is grace, and indicates manifest progress.

The same thing is true of what follows: "Ye are the salt of the earth" — it is that which keeps pure what is pure. Salt will not communicate purity to what is impure, but it is used as the preservative power according to righteousness. But light is another thing Hence we hear, in the 14th verse, "Ye are the light of the world." Light is not that which simply preserves what is good, but is an active power, which casts its bright shining into what is obscure, and dispels the darkness from before it. Thus it is evident that in this further word of the Lord we have answers to the differences already hinted at.

Much of the deepest interest might be found in the discourse; only this is not the occasion for entering into particulars. We have, as usual, righteousness developed according to Christ, which deals with man's wickedness under the heads of violence and corruption; next come other new principles of grace infinitely deepening what had been given under law. (Matt. 5) Thus, in the former of these, a word detects, as it were, the thirst of blood, as corruption lies in a look or desire. For it is no longer a question of mere acts, but of the soul's condition. Such is the scope of the fifth chapter. As earlier (verses 17, 18) the law is fully maintained in all its authority, we have later on (verses 21-48) superior principles of grace,

and deeper truths, mainly founded upon the revelation of the Father's name — the Father which is in heaven. Consequently it is not merely the question between man and man, but the Evil One on one side, and God Himself on the other; and God Himself, as a Father, disclosing, and proving the selfish condition of fallen man upon the earth.

In the second of these chapters (Matt. 6) composing the discourse, two main parts appear. The first is again righteousness. "Take heed [He says] that you do not your righteousness before men." Here it is not "alms," but "righteousness," as you may see in the margin. Then the righteousness spoken of branches out into three parts: — alms, which is one part of it; prayer, another part; and fasting, a part of it not to be despised. This is our righteousness, the especial point of which is, that it should be not a matter of ostentation, but before our Father who sees in secret. It is one of the salient features of Christianity. In the latter part of the chapter, we have entire confidence in our Father's goodness to us, counting upon His mercy, certain that He regards us as of infinite value, and that, therefore, we need not be careful as the Gentiles are, because our Father knows what we have need of. It is enough for us to seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: our Father's love cares for all the rest.

The last chapter (Matt. 7) presses on us the motives of heart in our intercourse with men and brethren, as well as with God, who, however good, loves that we should ask Him, and earnestly too, as to each need; the adequate consideration of what is due to others, and the energy that becomes ourselves; for the gate is strait, and narrow the way that leads to life; warnings against

the devil and the suggestions of his agents, the false prophets, who betray themselves by their fruits; and, lastly, the all-importance of remembering that it is not a thing of knowledge, or of miraculous power even, but of doing God's will, of a heart obedient to Christ's sayings. Here, again, if I be not mistaken, righteousness and grace are found alternating; for the exhortation against a censorious spirit is grounded on the certainty of retribution from others, and paves the way for an urgent call to self-judgment, which in us precedes all genuine exercise of grace. (verses 1-4.) Further, the caution against a lavishing of what was holy and beautiful on the profane is followed by rich and repeated encouragements to count on our Father's grace. (verses 5-1l.)

Here, however, I must for the present pause, though one can only and deeply regret being obliged to pass so very cursorily over the ground; but I have sought in this first lecture to give thus far as simple, and at the same time as complete, a view of this portion of Matthew as I well could. I am perfectly aware that there has not been time for comparing it much with the others; but occasions will, I trust, offer for bringing into strong contrast the different aspects of the various gospels. However, my aim is also that we should have before us our Lord, His person, His teaching, His way, in every gospel.

I pray the Lord that what has been put, however scantily, before souls may at least stir up enquiry on the part of God's children, and lead them to have perfect, absolute confidence in that word which is of His grace indeed. We may thus look for deep profit. For, although to enter upon the gospels before the soul has been founded upon the grace of God will not leave us without

a blessing, yet I am persuaded that the blessing is in every respect greater, when, having been attracted by the grace of Christ, we have at the same time been established in Him with all simplicity and assurance, in virtue of the accomplished work of redemption. Then, set free and at rest in our souls, we return to learn of Him, to look upon Him, to follow Him, to hear His word, to delight ourselves in His ways. The Lord grant that thus it may be, as we pursue our path through these different gospels which our God has vouchsafed to us.

Matthew 8 - 20:28.

Chapter 8, which opens the portion that comes before us tonight, is a striking illustration as well as proof of the method which God has been pleased to employ in giving us the apostle Matthew's account of our Lord Jesus. The dispensational aim here leads to a more manifest disregard of the bare circumstance of time than in any other specimen of these gospels. This is the more to be noticed, inasmuch as the gospel of Matthew has been in general adopted as the standard of time, save by those who have rather inclined to Luke as supplying the desideratum. To me it is evident, from a careful comparison of them all, as I think it is capable of clear and adequate proof to an unprejudiced Christian mind, that neither Matthew nor Luke confines himself to such an order of events. Of course, both do preserve chronological order when it is compatible with the objects the Holy Spirit had in inspiring them; but in both the order of time is subordinated to still greater purposes which God had in view. If we compare the eighth chapter, for example, with the corresponding circumstances, as far as they appear, in the gospel of

Mark, we shall find the latter gives us notes of time, which leave no doubt on my mind that Mark adheres to the scale of time: the design of the Holy Ghost required it, instead of dispensing with it in his case. The question fairly arises, Why it is that the Holy Ghost has been pleased so remarkably to leave time out of the question in this chapter, as well as in the next? The same indifference to the mere sequence of events is found occasionally in other parts of the gospel; but I have purposely dwelt upon this chapter 8, because here we have it throughout, and at the same time with evidence exceedingly simple and convincing.

The first thing to be remarked is, that the leper was an early incident in the manifestation of the healing power of our Lord. In his defilement he came to Jesus and sought to be cleansed, before the delivery of the sermon on the mount. Accordingly, notice that, in the manner in which the Holy Ghost introduces it, there is no statement of time whatever. No doubt the first verse says, that "when He was come down from the mount, great multitudes followed Him;" but then the second verse gives no intimation that the subject which follows is to be taken as chronologically subsequent. It does not say, that "then there came a leper," or "immediately there came a leper." No word whatever implies that the cleansing of the leper happened at that time. It says simply, "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Verse 4 seems quite adverse to the idea that great multitudes were witnesses of the cure; for why "tell no man," if so many knew it already? Inattention to this has perplexed many. They have not seized the aim of each gospel. They have treated the Bible either with

levity, or as too awful a book to be apprehended really; not with the reverence of faith, which waits on Him, and fails not in due time to understand His word. God does not permit Scripture to be thus used without losing its force, its beauty, and the grand object for which it was written.

If we turn to Mark 1, the proof of what I have said will appear as to the leper. At its close we see the leper approaching the Lord, after He had been preaching throughout Galilee and casting out devils. In Mark 2 it says, "And again he entered into Capernaum." He had been there before. Then, in Mark 3, there are notes of time more or less strong. In verse 13 our Lord "goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." To him who compares this with Luke 6, there need not remain a question as to the identity of the scene. They are the circumstances that preceded the discourse upon the mount, as given in Matt. 5 - 7. It was after our Lord had called the twelve, and ordained them — not after He had sent them forth, but after He had appointed them apostles — that the Lord comes down to a plateau upon the mountain, instead of remaining upon the more elevated parts where He had been before. Descending then upon the plateau, He delivered what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.

Examine the Scripture, and you will see for yourselves. It is not a thing that can be settled by a mere assertion. On the other hand, it is not too much to say, that the same Scriptures which convince one unbiassed mind that pays heed to these notes of time, will produce no less effect on others. If I assume from the words "set

forth in order," in the beginning of Luke's gospel, that therefore his is the chronological account, it will only lead me into confusion, both as to Luke and the other gospels; for proofs abound that the order of Luke, most methodical as he is, is by no means absolutely that of time. Of course, there is often the order of time, but through the central part, and not infrequently elsewhere, his setting forth in order turns on another principle, quite independent of mere succession of events. In other words, it is certain that in the gospel of Luke, in whose preface we have expressly the words "set in order," the Holy Ghost does in no way tie Himself to what, after all, is the most elementary form of arrangement; for it needs little observation to see, that the simple sequence of facts as they occurred is that which demands a faithful enumeration, and nothing more. Whereas, on the contrary, there are other kinds of order that call for more profound thought and enlarged views, if we may speak now after the manner of men; and, indeed, I deny not that these the Holy Ghost employed in His own wisdom, though it is hardly needful to say He could, if He pleased, demonstrate His superiority to any means or qualifications whatsoever. He could and did form His instruments according to His own sovereign will. It is a question, then, of internal evidence, what that particular order is which God has employed in each different gospel. Particular epochs in Luke are noted with great care; but, speaking now of the general course of the Lord's life, a little attention will discover, from the immensely greater preponderance paid to the consideration of time in the second gospel, that there we have events from first to last given to us in their consecutive order. It appears to me, that the nature or aim of Mark's gospel demands this. The

grounds of such a judgment will naturally come before us ere long: I can merely refer to it now as my conviction.

If this be a sound judgment, the comparison of the first chapter of Mark affords decisive evidence that the Holy Ghost in Matthew has taken the leper out of the mere time and circumstances of actual occurrence, and has reserved his case for a wholly different service. It is true that in this particular instance Mark no more surrounds the leper with notes of time and place than do Matthew and Luke. We are dependent, therefore, for determining this case, on the fact that Mark does habitually adhere to the chain of events. But if Matthew here laid aside all question of time, it was in view of other and weightier considerations for his object. In other words, the leper is here introduced after the sermon on the mount, though, in fact, the circumstance took place long before it. The design is, I think, manifest: the Spirit of God is here giving a vivid picture of the manifestation of the Messiah, of His divine glory, of His grace and power, with the effect of this manifestation. Hence it is that He has grouped together circumstances which make this plain, without raising the question of when they occurred; in fact, they range over a large space, and, otherwise viewed, are in total disorder. Thus it is easy to see, that the reason for here putting together the leper and the centurion lies in the Lord's dealing with the Jew, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in His deep grace working in the Gentile's heart, and forming his faith, as well as answering it, according to His own heart. The leper approaches the Lord with homage, but with a most inadequate belief in His love and readiness to meet his need. The Saviour, while He puts forth His

hand, touching him as man, and yet as none but Jehovah might dare to do, dispels the hopeless disease at once. Thus, and after the tenderest sort, there is that which evidences the Messiah on earth present to heal His people who appeal to Him; and the Jew, above all counting upon His bodily presence — demanding it, I may say, according to the warrant of prophecy, finds in Jesus not merely the man, but the God of Israel. Who but God could heal? Who could touch the leper save Emmanuel? A mere Jew would have been defiled. He who gave the law maintained its authority, and used it as an occasion for testifying His own power and presence. Would any man make of the Messiah a mere man and a mere subject of the law given by Moses? Let them read their error in One who was evidently superior to the condition and the ruin of man in Israel. Let them recognize the power that banished the leprosy, and the grace withal that touched the leper. It was true that He was made of woman, and made under the law; but He was Jehovah Himself, that lowly Nazarene. However suitable to the Jewish expectation that He should be found a man, undeniably there was that apparent which was infinitely above the Jew's thought; for the Jew showed his own degradation and unbelief in the low ideas he entertained of the Messiah. He was really God in man; and all these wonderful features are here presented and compressed in this most simple, but at the same time significant, action of the Saviour — the fitting frontispiece to Matthew's manifestation of the Messiah to Israel.

In immediate juxtaposition to this stands the Gentile centurion, who seeks healing for his servant. Considerable time, it is true, elapsed between the two

facts; but this only makes it the more sure and plain, that they are grouped together with a divine purpose. The Lord then had been shown such as He was towards Israel, had Israel in their leprosy come to Him, as did the leper, even with a faith exceedingly short of that which was due to His real glory and His love. But Israel had no sense of their leprosy; and they valued not, but despised, their Messiah, albeit divine — I might almost say because divine. Next, we behold Him meeting the centurion after another manner altogether. If He offers to go to his house, it was to bring out the faith that He had created in the heart of the centurion. Gentile as he was, he was for that very, reason the less narrowed in his thoughts of the Saviour by the prevalent notions of Israel, yea, or even by Old Testament hopes, precious as they are. God had given his soul a deeper, fuller sight of Christ; for the Gentile's words prove that he had apprehended God in the man who was healing at that moment all sickness and disease in Galilee. I say not how fax he had realized this profound truth; I say not that he could have defined his thoughts; but he knew and declared His command of all as truly God. In him there was a spiritual force far beyond that found in the leper, to whom the hand that touched, as well as cleansed, him proclaimed Israel's need and state as truly as Emmanuel's grace.

As for the Gentile, the Lord's proffer to go and heal his servant brought out the singular strength of his faith. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof" He had only to say in a word, and his servant should be healed. The bodily presence of the Messiah was not needed. God could not be limited by a question of place; His word was enough. Disease must obey Him,

as the soldier or the servant obeyed the centurion, their superior. What an anticipation of the walk by faith, not by sight, in which the Gentiles, when called, ought to have glorified God, when the rejection of the Messiah by His own ancient people gave occasion to the Gentile call as a distinct thing! It is evident that the bodily presence of the Messiah is the very essence of the former scene, as it ought to be in dealing with the leper, who is a kind of type of what Israel should have been in seeking cleansing at His hands. So, on the other hand, the centurion sets forth with no less aptness the characteristic faith that suits the Gentile, in a simplicity which looks for nothing but the word of His mouth, is perfectly content with it, knows that, whatever the disease may be, He has only to speak the word, and it is done according to His divine will. That blessed One was here whom he knew to be God, who was to him the impersonation of divine power and goodness — His presence was uncalled for, His word more than enough. The Lord admired the faith superior to Israel's, and took that occasion to intimate the casting out of the sons or natural heirs of the kingdom, and the entrance of many from east and west to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the heavens. What can be conceived so perfectly to illustrate the great design of the gospel of Matthew?

Thus, in the scene of the leper, we have Jesus presented as "Jehovah that healeth Israel," as man here below, and in Jewish relationships, still maintaining the law. Next, we find Him confessed by the centurion, no longer as the Messiah, when actually with them, confessed according to a faith which saw the deeper glory of His person as supreme, competent to heal, no matter where,

or whom, or what, by a word; and this the Lord Himself hails as the foreshadowing of a rich incoming of many multitudes to the praise of His name, when the Jews should be cast out. Evidently it is the change of dispensation that is in question and at hand, the cutting off of the fleshly seed for their unbelief, and the bringing in of numerous believers in the name of the Lord from among the Gentiles.

Then follows another incident, which equally proves that the Spirit of God is not here reciting the facts in their natural succession; for it is assuredly not at this moment historically that the Lord goes into the house of Peter, sees there his wife's mother laid sick of a fever, touches her hand, and raises her up, so that she ministers unto them at once. In this we have another striking illustration of the same principle, because this miracle, in point of fact, was wrought long before the healing of the centurion's servant, or even of the leper. This, too, we ascertain from Mark 1, where there are clear marks of the time. The Lord was in Capernaum, where Peter lived; and on a certain Sabbath-day, after the call of Peter, wrought in the synagogue mighty deeds, which are here recorded, and by Luke also. Verse 29 gives us strict time. "And forthwith when they were come out of the synagogue they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John; but Simon's wife's mother was sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." It would require the credulity of a sceptic to believe that this is not the self-same fact that we have before us in Matthew 8. I feel sure that no Christian harbours a doubt about it. But if this be so, there is here

absolute certainty that our Lord, on the very Sabbath in which He cast out the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue of Capernaum, immediately after quitting the synagogue, entered the house of Peter, and that there and then He healed Peter's wife's mother of the fever. Subsequent, considerably, to this was the case of the centurion's servant, preceded a good while before by the cleansing of the leper.

How are we to account for a selection so marked, an elimination of time so complete? Surely not by inaccuracy; surely not by indifference to order, but contrariwise by divine wisdom that arranged the facts with a view to a purpose worthy of itself: God's arrangement of all things — more particularly in this part of Matthew — to give us an adequate manifestation of the Messiah; and, as we have seen, first, what He was to the appeal of the Jew; next, what He was and would be to Gentile faith, in still richer form and fulness. So now we have, in the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, another fact containing a principle of great value, — that His grace towards the Gentile does not in the least degree blunt His heart to the claims of relationship after the flesh. It was clearly a question of connection with the apostle of the circumcision (i.e., Peter's wife's mother). We have the natural tie here brought into prominence; and this was a claim that Christ slighted not. For He loved Peter — felt for him, and his wife's mother was precious in His sight. This sets forth not at all the way in which the Christian stands related to Christ; for even though we had known Him after the flesh, henceforth know we Him no more. But it is expressly the pattern after which He was to deal, and will deal, with Israel. Zion may say of the Lord who

laboured in vain, whom the nation abhorred, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Not so. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Thus it is shown that, though we have rich grace to the Gentile, there is the remembrance of natural relationship still.

In the evening multitudes are brought, taking advantage of the power that had so shown itself, publicly in the synagogue, and privately in the house of Peter; and the Lord accomplished the words of Isaiah 53:4: "Himself," it is said, "took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," an oracle we might do well to consider in the limit of its application here. In what sense did Jesus, our Lord, take their infirmities, and bear their sicknesses? In this, as I believe, that He never employed the virtue that was in Him to meet sickness or infirmity as a matter of mere power, but in deep compassionate feeling He entered into the whole reality of the case. He healed, and bore its burden on His heart before God, as truly as He took it away from men. It was precisely because He was Himself untouchable by sickness and infirmity, that He was free so to take up each consequence of sin thus. Therefore it was not a mere simple fact that He banished sickness or infirmity, but He carried them in His spirit before God. To my mind, the depth of such grace only enhances the beauty of Jesus, and is the very last possible ground that justifies man in thinking lightly of the Saviour.

After this our Lord sees great multitudes following Him, and gives commandment to go to the other side. Here again is found a fresh case of the same remarkable principle of selection of events to form a complete

picture, which I have maintained to be the true key of all. The Spirit of God has been pleased to cull and class facts otherwise unconnected; for here follow conversations that took place a long time after any of the events we have been occupied with. When do you suppose these conversations actually occurred, if we go to the question of their date? Take notice of the care with which the Spirit of God here omits all reference to this: "And a certain scribe came." There is no note of the time when he came, but simply the fact that he did come. It was really after the transfiguration recorded in chapter 17 of our gospel. Subsequently to that, the scribe offered to follow Jesus whithersoever He went. We know this by comparing it with the gospel of Luke. And so with the other conversation: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father;" it was after the glory of Christ had been witnessed on the holy mount, when man's selfishness of heart showed itself in contrast to the grace of God.

Next, the storm follows. "There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch, that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep." When did this take place, if we enquire into it merely as a matter of historical fact? On the evening of the day when He delivered the seven parables given in Matthew 13. The truth of this is apparent, if we compare the gospel of Mark. Thus, the fourth chapter of Mark coincides, marked with such data as can leave no doubt. We have, first, the sower sowing the word. Then, after the parable of the mustard seed (ver. 33), it is added, "And with many such parables spake He the word unto them.... and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples [in both the parables and the explanations alluding to what we

possess in Matthew 13.]. And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, let us pass over unto the other side. [There is what I call a clear, unmistakable note of time.] And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" After this (what makes it still more unquestionable) comes the case of the demoniac. It is true, we have only one in Mark, as in Luke; whereas in our gospel we have two. Nothing can be simpler. There were two; but the Spirit of God chose out, in Mark and Luke, the more remarkable of the two, and traces for us his history, a history of no small interest and importance, as we may feel when we come to Mark; but it was of equal moment for the gospel of Matthew that the two demoniacs should be mentioned here, although one of them was in himself, as I gather, a far more strikingly desperate case than the other. The reason I consider to be plain; and the same principle applies to various other parts of our gospel where we have two cases mentioned, where in the other gospels we have only one. The key to it is this, that Matthew was led by the Holy Ghost to keep in view adequate testimony to the Jewish people; it was the tender goodness of God

that would meet them in a manner that was suitable under the law. Now, it was an established principle, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. This, then, I apprehend to be the reason why we End two demoniacs mentioned; whereas, in Mark or Luke for other purposes, the Spirit of God only draws attention to one of the two. A Gentile (indeed, any mind not under any kind of legal prejudice or difficulty) would be far more moved by a detailed account of what was more, conspicuous. The fact of two without the personal details would not powerfully tell upon mere Gentiles perhaps, though to a Jew it might be for some ends necessary. I do not pretend to say this was the only purpose served; far be it from me to think of restraining the Spirit of God within the narrow bounds of our vision. Let none suppose that, in giving my own convictions, I have the presumptuous thought of putting these forward as if they were the sole motives in God's mind. It is enough to meet a difficulty which many feel by the simple plea that the reason assigned is in my judgment a valid explanation, and in itself a sufficient solution of the apparent discrepancy. If it be so, it is surely a ground of thankfulness to God; for it turns a stumbling-block into an evidence of the perfection of Scripture.

Reviewing, then, these closing incidents of the chapter (ver. 19-22), we find first of all the utter worthlessness of the flesh's readiness to follow Jesus. The motives of the natural heart are laid bare. Does this scribe offer to follow Jesus? He was not called. Such is the perversity of man, that he who is not called thinks he can follow Jesus whithersoever He goes. The Lord hints at what the man's real desires were — not Christ, not heaven, not

eternity, but present things. If he were willing to follow the Lord, it was for what he could get. The scribe had no heart for the hidden glory. Surely, had he seen this, everything was there; but he saw it not, and so the Lord spread out His actual portion, as it literally was, without one word about the unseen and eternal. "The foxes," says He, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He takes accordingly the title of the "Son of man" for the first time in this gospel. He has His rejection before His eyes, as well as the presumptuous unbelief of this sordid, and self-confident, would-be follower.

Again, when we listen to another (and now it is one of His disciples), at once faith shows its feebleness. "Suffer me first," he says, "to go and bury my father." The man that was not called promises to go anywhere, in his own strength; but the man that was called feels the difficulty, and pleads a natural duty before following Jesus. Oh, what a heart is ours! but what a heart was His!

In the next scene, then, we have the disciples as a whole tried by a sudden danger to which their sleeping Master paid no heed. This tested their thoughts of the glory of Jesus. No doubt the tempest was great; but what harm could it do to Jesus? No doubt the ship was covered with the waves; but how could that imperil the Lord of all? They forgot His glory in their own anxiety and selfishness. They measured Jesus by their own impotence. A great tempest. and a sinking ship are serious difficulties to a man. "Lord, save us; we perish," cried they, as they awoke Him; and He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. Little faith leaves us as fearful for ourselves as dim witnesses of His glory whom the most unruly elements obey.

In what follows we have that which is necessary, to complete the picture of the other side. The Lord works in delivering power; but withal the power of Satan fills and carries away the unclean to their own destruction. Yet man, in face of all, is so deceived of the enemy, that he prefers to be left with the demons rather than enjoy the presence of the Deliverer. Such was and is man. But the future is in view also. The delivered demoniacs are, to my mind, clearly the foreshadow of the Lord's grace in the latter days, separating a remnant to Himself, and banishing the power of Satan from this small but sufficient witness of His salvation. The evil spirits asked leave to pass into the herd of swine, which thus typify the final condition of the defiled, apostate mass of Israel; their presumptuous and impenitent unbelief reduces them to that deep degradation — not merely the unclean, but the unclean filled with the power of Satan, and carried down to swift destruction. It is a just prefiguration of what will be in the close of the age — the mass of the unbelieving Jews, now impure, but then also given up to the devil, and so to evident perdition.

Thus, in the chapter before us, we have a very comprehensive sketch of the Lord's manifestation from that time, and in type going on to the end of the age. In the chapter that follows we have a companion picture, carrying on, no doubt, the lord's presentation to Israel, but from a different point of view; for in Matt. 9 it is not merely the people tried, but more especially the religious leaders, till all closes in blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This was testing matters more closely. Had there been a single thing good in Israel, their choicest guides would have stood that test. The people might have failed, but, surely, there were some differences —

surely those that were honoured and valued were not so depraved! Those that were priests in the house of God — would not they at least receive their own Messiah? This question is accordingly put to the proof in the ninth chapter. To the end the events are put together, just as in Matt. 8, without regard to the point of time when they occurred.

"And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city." Having left Nazareth, as we saw, He takes up His abode in Capernaum, which was henceforth "His own city." To the proud inhabitant of Jerusalem, both one and the other were but a choice and change within a land of darkness. But it was for a land of darkness and sin and death that Jesus came from heaven — the Messiah, not according to their thoughts, but the Lord and Saviour, the God-man. So in this case there was brought to Him a paralytic man, lying upon a bed, "and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Most clearly it is not so much a question of sin in the aspect of uncleanness (typifying deeper things, but still connected with the ceremonial requirements of Israel, as we find from what our Lord said in the chapter to the cleansed leper). It is more particularly sin, viewed as guilt, and consequently as that which absolutely breaks and destroys all power in the soul towards both God and man. Hence, here it is a question not merely of cleansing, but of forgiveness, and forgiveness, too, as that which precedes power, manifested before men. There never can be strength in the soul till forgiveness is known. There may be desires, there may be the working of the Spirit of God, but there can be no power to walk before men and to glorify God thus till there is

forgiveness possessed and enjoyed in the heart. This was the very blessing that aroused, above all, the hatred of the scribes. The priest, in chap. 8, could not deny what was done in the case of the leper, who showed himself duly, and brought his offering, according to the law, to the altar. Though a testimony to them, still it was in the result a recognition of what Moses commanded. But here pardon dispensed on earth arouses the pride of the religious leaders to the quick, and implacably. Nevertheless, the Lord did not withhold the infinite boon, though He knew too well their thoughts; He spoke the word of forgiveness, though He read their evil heart that counted it blasphemy. This utter, growing rejection of Jesus was coming out now — rejection, at first allowed and whispered in the heart, soon to be pronounced in words like drawn swords.

"And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." Jesus blessedly answered their thoughts, had there only been a conscience to hear the word of power and grace, which brings out His glory the more. "That ye may know," He says, "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," etc. He now takes His place of rejection; for Him it is manifest even now by their inmost thoughts of Him when revealed. "This man blasphemeth." Yet is He the Son of man who hath power on earth to forgive sins; and He uses His authority. "That ye may know it (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." The man's walk before them testifies to the reality of his forgiveness before God. It ought to be so with every forgiven soul. This as yet draws out wonder, at least from the witnessing

multitudes, that God had given such power unto men. They glorified God.

On this the Lord proceeds to take a step farther, and makes a deeper inroad, if possible, upon Jewish prejudice. He is not here sought as by the leper, the centurion, the friends of the palsied man; He Himself calls Matthew, a publican — just the one to write the gospel of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. What instrument so suitable? It was a scorned Messiah who, when rejected of His own people, Israel, turned to the Gentiles by the will of God: it was One who could look upon publicans and sinners anywhere. Thus Matthew, called at the very receipt of custom, follows Jesus, and makes a feast for Him. This furnishes occasion to the Pharisees to vent their unbelief: to them nothing is so offensive as grace, either in doctrine or in practice. The scribes, at the beginning of the chapter, could not hide from the Lord their bitter rejection of His glory as man on earth entitled, as His humiliation and cross would prove, to forgive. Here, too, these Pharisees question and reproach His grace, when they see the Lord sitting at ease in the presence of publicans and sinners, who came and sat down with Him in Matthew's house. They said to His disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" The Lord shows that such unbelief justly and necessarily excludes itself, but not others, from blessing. To heal was the work for which He was come. it was not for the whole the Physician was needed. How little they had learnt the divine lesson of grace, not ordinances! "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Jesus was there to call, not righteous men, but sinners.

Nor was the unbelief confined to these religionists of letter and form; for next (verse 14) the question comes from John's disciples: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" Throughout it is the religious kind that are tested and found wanting. The Lord pleads the cause of the disciples. "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Fasting, indeed, would follow when the Bridegroom was taken from them. Thus He points out the utter moral incongruity of fasting at that moment, and intimates that it was not merely the fact that He was going to be rejected, but that to conciliate His teaching and His will with the old thing was hopeless. What He was introducing could not mix with Judaism. Thus it was not merely that there was an evil heart of unbelief in the Jew particularly, but law and grace cannot be yoked together. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse." Nor was it only a difference in the forms the truth took; but the vital principle which Christ was diffusing could not be so maintained. "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." The spirit, as well as the form, was alien.

But at the same time it is plain, although He bore the consciousness of the vast change He was introducing, and expressed it thus fully and early in the history, nothing turned away His heart from Israel. The very next scene, the case of Jairus, the ruler, shows it. "My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." The details, found

elsewhere, of her being at the point of death — then, before reaching the house, the news that she was dead, are not here. Whatever the time may have been, whatever the incidents added by others, the account is given here for the purpose of showing, that as Israel's case was desperate, even unto death, so He, the Messiah, was the giver of life, when all, humanly speaking, was over. He was then present, a man despised, yet with title to forgive sins, proved by immediate power to heal. If those who trusted in themselves that they were wise and righteous would not have Him, He would call even a publican on the spot to be among the most honoured of His followers, and would not disdain to be their joy when they desired His honour in the exercise of His grace. Sorrow would come full soon when He, the Bridegroom of His people, should be taken away; and then should they fast.

Nevertheless, His ear was open to the call on behalf of Israel perishing, dying, dead. He had been preparing them for the new things, and the impossibility of making them coalesce with the old. But none the less do we find His affections engaged for the help of the helpless. He goes to raise the dead, and the woman with the issue of blood touches Him by the way. No matter what the great purpose might be, He was there for faith. Far different this was from the errand on which He was intent; but He was there for faith. It was His meat to do the will of God. He was there for the express purpose of glorifying God. Power and love were come for any one to draw on. If there were, so to speak, a justification of circumcision by faith, undoubtedly there was also the justification of uncircumcision through their faith. The question was not who or what came in the way; whoever appealed to Him,

there He was for them. And He was Jesus, Emmanuel. When He reaches the house, minstrels were there, and people, making a noise: the expression, if of woe, certainly of impotent despair. They mock the calm utterance of Him who chooses things that are not; and the Lord turns out the unbelievers, and demonstrates the glorious truth that the maid was not dead, but living.

Nor is this all. He gives sight to the blind. "And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." It was necessary to complete the picture. Life had been imparted to, the sleeping maid of Zion — the blind men call on Him as the Son of David, and not in vain. They confess their faith, and He touches their eyes. Thus, whatever the peculiarity of the new blessings, the old thing could be taken up, though upon new grounds, and, of course, on the confession that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The two blind men called upon Him as the Son of David; a sample this of what will be in the end, when the heart of Israel turns to the Lord, and the veil is done away. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

It is not enough that Israel be awakened from the sleep of death, and see aright. There must be the mouth to praise the Lord, and speak of the glorious honour of His majesty, as well as eyes to wait on Him. So we have a farther scene. Israel must give full testimony in the bright day of His coming. Accordingly, here we have a witness of it, and a witness so much the sweeter, because the present total rejection that was filling the heart of the leaders surely testified to the Lord's heart of that which was at hand. But nothing turned aside the purpose of God, or the activity of His grace. "As they

went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was come out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel." (See Matt. 9:32, 33.) The Pharisees were enraged at a power they could not deny, which rebuked themselves so much the more on account of its persistent grace; but Jesus passes by all blasphemy as yet, and goes on His way — nothing hinders His course of love. He "went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." The faithful and true witness, it was His to display that power in goodness which shall be put forth fully in the world to come, the great day when the Lord will manifest Himself to every eye as Son of David, and Son of man too.

At the close of this chapter 9, in His deep compassion He bids the disciples pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest. At the beginning of Matt. 10 He Himself sends forth themselves as labourers. He is the Lord of the harvest. It was a grave step this, and in view of His rejection now. In our gospel we have not seen the apostles called and ordained. Matthew gives no such details, but call and mission are together here. But, as I have stated, the choice and ordination of the twelve apostles had really taken place before the sermon on the mount, though not mentioned in Matthew, but in Mark and Luke. (Compare Mark 3:13-19, and Mark 6:7-11; Luke 6 and 9) The mission of the apostles did not take place till afterwards. In Matthew we have no distinction of their call from their mission. But the mission is given here in strict

accordance with what the gospel demands. It is a summons from the King to His people Israel. So thoroughly is it in view of Israel that our Lord does not say one word here about the Church, or the intervening condition of Christendom. He speaks of Israel then, and of Israel before He comes in glory, but He entirely omits any notice of the circumstances which were to come in by the way. He tells them that they should not have gone over (or finished) the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come. Not that His own rejection was not before His spirit, but here He looks not beyond that land and people; and, as far as the twelve were concerned, He sends them on a mission which goes on to the end of the an. Thus, the present dealings of God in grace, the actual shape taken by the kingdom of heaven, the calling of the Gentiles, the formation of the Church, are all passed completely over. We shall find something of these mysteries later on in this gospel; but here it is simply a Jewish testimony of Jehovah-Messiah in His unwearied love, through His twelve heralds, and in spite of rising unbelief, maintaining to the end what His grace had in view for Israel. He would send fit messengers, nor would the work be done till the rejected Messiah, the Son of man, came. The apostles were then sent thus, no doubt, forerunners of those whom the Lord will raise up for the latter day. Time would fail now to dwell on this chapter, interesting as it is. My object, of course, is to point out as clearly as possible the structure of the gospel, and to explain according to my measure why there are these strong differences between the gospels of Matthew and the rest, as compared with one another. The ignorance is wholly on our side: all they say or omit was owing to the far-reaching and gracious wisdom of Him who inspired them.

Matthew 11, exceedingly critical for Israel, and of surpassing beauty, as it is, must not be passed over without some few words. Here we find our Lord, after sending out the chosen witnesses of the truth (so momentous to Israel, above all) of His own Messiahship, realizing His utter rejection, yet rejoicing withal in God the Father's counsels of glory and grace, while the real secret in the chapter, as in fact, was His being not Messiah only, nor Son of man, but the Son of the Father, whose person none knows but Himself. But, from first to last, what a trial of spirit, and what triumph! Some consider that John the Baptist enquired solely for the sake of his disciples. But I see no sufficient reason to refuse the impression that John found it hard to reconcile his continued imprisonment with a present Messiah; nor do I discern a sound judgment of the case, or a profound knowledge of the heart, in those who thus raise doubts as to John's sincerity, any more than they appear to me to exalt the character of this honoured man of God, by supposing him to play a part which really belonged to others. What can be simpler than that John put the question through his disciples, because he (not they only) had a question in the mind? It probably was no more than a grave though passing difficulty, which he desired to have cleared up with all fulness for their sakes, as well as his own. In short, he had a question because he was a man. It is not for us surely to think this impossible. Have we, spite of superior privileges, such unwavering faith, that we can afford to treat the matter as incredible in John, and therefore only capable of solution in his staggering disciples? Let those who have so little experience of what man is, even in the regenerate, beware lest they impute to the Baptist such an acting of a part as shocks us, when Jerome imputed it

to Peter and Paul in the censure of Gal. 2. The Lord, no doubt, knew the heart of His servant, and could feel for him in the effect that circumstances took upon him. When He uttered the words, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," it is to me evident that there was an allusion to the wavering let it be but for a moment of John's soul. The fact is, beloved brethren, there is but one Jesus; and whoever it may be, whether John the Baptist, or the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, after all it is divinely-given faith which alone sustains: else man has to learn painfully somewhat of himself; and what is he to be accounted of?

Our Lord then answers, with perfect dignity, as well as grace; He puts before the disciples of John the real state of the case; He furnishes them with plain, positive facts, that could leave nothing to be desired by John's mind when he weighed all as a testimony from God. This done, with a word for the conscience appended, He takes up and pleads the cause of John. It ought to have been John's place to have proclaimed the glory of Jesus; but all things in this world are the reverse of what they ought to be, and of what will be when Jesus takes the throne, coming in power and glory. But when the Lord was here, no matter what the unbelief of others, it was only an opportunity for the grace of Jesus to shine out. So it was here; and our Lord turns to eternal account, in His own goodness, the shortcoming of John the Baptist, the greatest of women-born. Far from lowering the position of His servant, He declares there was none greater among mortal men. The failure of this greatest of women-born only gives Him the just occasion to show the total change at hand, when it should not be a question of man, but of God, yea, of the kingdom of

heaven, the least in which new state should be greater than John. And what makes this still more striking, is the certainty that the kingdom, bright as it is, is by no means the thing nearest to Jesus. The Church, which is His body and bride, has a far more intimate place, even though true of the same persons.

Next, He lays bare the capricious unbelief of man, only consistent in thwarting every thing and one that God employs for his good; then, His own entire rejection where He had most laboured. It was going on, then, to the bitter end, and surely not without such suffering and sorrow as holy, unselfish, obedient love alone can know. Wretched we, that we should need such proof of it; wretched, that we should be so slow of heart to answer to it, or even to feel its immensity!

"Then began he to upbraid the cities 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 tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you..... At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father." What feelings at such a time! Oh, for grace so to bow and bless God, even when our little travail seems in vain! At that time Jesus answered, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." We seem completely borne away from the ordinary level of our gospel to the higher region of the disciple whom Jesus loved. We are, in fact, in the presence of that which John

so loves to dwell on — Jesus viewed not merely as Son of David or Abraham, or Seed of the woman, but as the Father's Son, the Son as the Father gave, sent, appreciated, and loved Him. So, when more is added, He says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This, of course, is not the moment to unfold it. I merely indicate by the way how the thorough increasing rejection of the Lord Jesus in His lower glory has but the effect of bringing out the revelation of His higher. So, I believe now, there is no attempt ever made on the Name of the Son of God, there is not a single shaft levelled at Him, but the Spirit turns to the holy, and true, and sweet task of asserting anew and more loudly His glory, which enlarges the expression of His grace to man. Only tradition will not do this work, nor will human thoughts or feelings.

In Matt. 12 we find not so much Jesus present and despised of men, as these men of Israel, the rejectors, in the presence of Jesus. Hence, the Lord Jesus is here disclosing throughout, that the doom of Israel was pronounced and impending. If it was His rejection, these scornful men were themselves rejected in the very act. The plucking of the corn, and the healing of the withered hand, had taken place long before. Mark gives them in the end of his second and the beginning of his third chapters. Why are they postponed here? Because Matthew's object is the display of the change of dispensation through, or consequent on, the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. Hence, he waits to present their

rejection of the Messiah, as morally complete as possible in his statement of it, though necessarily not complete in outward accomplishment. Of course, the facts of the cross were necessary to give it an evident and literal fulfilment; but we have it first apparent in His life, and it is blessed to see it thus accomplished, as it were, in what passed with Himself; fully realized in His own spirit, and the results exposed before the external facts gave the fullest expression to Jewish unbelief. He was not taken by surprise; He knew it from the beginning Man's implacable hatred is brought about most manifestly in the ways and spirit of His rejectors. The Lord Jesus, even before He pronounced the sentence, for so it was, indicated what was at hand in these two instances of the Sabbath-day, though one may not now linger on them. The first is the defence of the disciples, grounded on analogies taken from that which had the sanction of God of old, as well as on His own glory now. Reject Him as the Messiah; in that rejection the moral glory of the Son of man would be laid as the foundation of His exaltation and manifestation another day; He was Lord of the Sabbath-day. In the next incident the force of the plea turns on God's goodness towards the wretchedness of man. It is not only the fact that God slighted matters of prescriptive ordinance because of the ruined state of Israel, who rejected His true anointed King, but there was this principle also, that certainly God was not going to bind Himself not to do good where abject need was. It might be well enough for a Pharisee; it might be worthy of a legal formalist, but it would never do for God; and the Lord Jesus was come here not to accommodate Himself to their thoughts, but, above all, to do God's will of holy love in an evil, wretched world. "Behold my servant, whom I have

chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased." In truth, this was Emmanuel, God with us. If God was there, what else could He, would He do? Lowly, noiseless grace now it was to be, according to the prophet, till the hour strikes for victory in judgment. So He meekly retires, healing, yet forbidding it to be blazed abroad. But still, it was His carrying on the great process of shewing out more and more the total rejection of His rejectors. Hence, lower down in the chapter, after the demon was cast out of the blind and dumb man before the amazed people, the Pharisees, irritated by their question, Is not this the Son of David? essayed to destroy the testimony with their utmost and blasphemous contempt. "This [fellow]," etc.

The English translators have thus given the sense well; for the expression really conveys this slight, though the word "fellow" is printed in italics. The Greek word is constantly so used as an expression of contempt, "This [fellow] doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." The Lord now lets them know their mad folly, and warns them that this blasphemy was about to culminate in a still deeper, deadlier form when the Holy Ghost should be spoken against as He had been. Men little weigh what their words will sound and prove in the day of judgment. He sets forth the sign of the prophet Jonah, the repentance of the men of Nineveh, the preaching of Jonah, and the earnest zeal of the queen of the South in Solomon's day, when an incomparably greater was there despised. But if He here does not go beyond a hint of that which the Gentiles were about to receive on the ruinous unbelief and judgment of the Jew, He does not keep back their own awful course and doom in the figure that follows. Their

state had long been that of a man whom the unclean spirit had left, after a former dwelling in him. Outwardly it was a condition of comparative cleanness. Idols, abominations, no longer infected that dwelling as of old. Then says the unclean spirit, "I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Thus He sets forth both the past, the present, and the awful future of Israel, before the day of His own coming from heaven, when there will be not only the return of idolatry, solemn to say, but the full power of Satan associated with it, as we see in Dan. 11:36-39; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13:11-15. It is clear that the unclean spirit, returning, brings idolatry back again. It is equally clear that the seven worse spirits mean the complete energy of the devil in the maintenance of Antichrist against the true Christ: and this, strange to say, along with idols. Thus the end is as the beginning, and even far, far worse. On this the Lord takes another step, when one said to Him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." A double action follows. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" said the Lord; and then stretched forth His hand toward His disciples with the words, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Thus the old link with the flesh, with Israel, is now disowned; and the new relationships of faith, founded on doing the will of His Father (it is not a question of the law in any sort), are alone

acknowledged. Hence the Lord would raise up a fresh testimony altogether, and do a new work suitable to it. This would not be a legal claim on man, but the scattering of good seed, life and fruit from God, and this in the unlimited field of the world, not in the land of Israel merely. In Matthew 13 we have the well-known sketch of these new ways of God. The kingdom of heaven assumes a form unknown to prophecy, and, in its successive mysteries, fills up the interval between the rejected Christ's going to heaven, and His returning again in glory.

Many words are not now required for that which is happily familiar to most here. Let me passingly notice a very few particulars. We have here not only our Lord's ministry in the first parable, but in the second parable that which He does by His servants. Then follows the rise of what was great in its littleness till it became little in its greatness in the earth; and the development and spread of doctrine, till the measured space assigned to it is brought under its assimilating influence. It is not here a question of life (as in the seed at first), but a system of christian doctrine; not life germinating and bearing fruit, but mere dogma — natural mind — which is exposed to it. Thus the great tree and the leavened mass are in fact the two sides of Christendom. Then inside the house we have not only the Lord explaining the parable, the history from first to last of the tares and wheat, the mingling of evil with the good which grace had sown, but more than that, we have the kingdom viewed according to divine thoughts and purposes. First of these comes the treasure hidden in the field, for which the man sells all he had, securing the field for the sake of the treasure. Next is the one pearl of great price, the

unity and beauty of that which was so dear to the merchantman. Not merely were there many pieces of value, but one pearl of great price. Finally, we have all wound up, after the going forth of a testimony which was truly universal in its scope, by the judicial severance at the close, when it is not only the good put into vessels, but the bad dealt with by the due instruments of the power of God.

In Matthew 14 facts are narrated which manifest the great change of dispensation that the Lord, in setting forth the parables we have just noticed, had been preparing them for. The violent man, Herod, guilty of innocent blood, then reigned in the land, in contrast with whom goes Jesus into the wilderness, showing who and what He was — the Shepherd of Israel, ready and able to care for the people. The disciples most inadequately perceive His glory; but the Lord acts according to His own mind. After this, dismissing the multitudes, He retires alone, to pray, on a mountain, as the disciples toil over the storm-tossed lake, the wind being contrary. It is a picture of what was about to take place when the Lord Jesus, quitting Israel and the earth, ascends on high, and all assumes another form — not the reign upon earth, but intercession in heaven. But at the end, when His disciples are in the extremity of trouble, in the midst of the sea, the Lord walks on the sea toward them, and bids them not fear; for they were troubled and afraid. Peter asks a word from his Master, and leaves the ship to join Him on the water. There will be differences at the close. All will not be the wise that understand, nor those who instruct the mass in righteousness. But every Scripture that treats of that time proves what dread, what anxiety, what dark clouds

will be ever and anon. So it was here. Peter goes forth, but losing sight of the Lord in the presence of the troubled waves, and yielding to his ordinary experience, he fears the strong wind, and is only saved by the outstretched hand of Jesus, who rebukes his doubt. Thereon, coming into the ship, the wind ceases, and the Lord exercises His gracious power in beneficent effects around. It was the little foreshadowing of what will be when the Lord has joined the remnant in the last days, and then fills with blessing the land that He touches.

In Matthew 15 we have another picture, and twofold. Jerusalem's proud, traditional hypocrisy is exposed, and grace fully blesses the tried Gentile. This finds its fitting place, not in Luke, but in Matthew, particularly as the details here (not in Mark, who only gives the general fact) cast great light upon God's dispensational ways. Accordingly, here we have, first, the Lord judging the wrong thoughts of "Scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem." This gives an opportunity to teach what truly defiles — not things that go into the man, but those things which, proceeding out of the mouth, come forth from the heart. To eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man. It is the death-blow to human tradition and ordinance in divine things, and in reality depends on the truth of the absolute ruin of man — a truth which, as we see, the disciples were very slow to recognize. On the other side of the picture, behold the Lord leading on a soul to draw on divine grace in the most glorious manner. The woman of Canaan, out of the borders of Tyre and Sidon, appeals to Him; a Gentile of most ominous name and belongings — a Gentile whose case was desperate; for she appeals on behalf of her daughter, grievously vexed with a devil. What could be

said of her intelligence then? Had she not such confusion of thought that, if the Lord had heeded her words, it must have been destruction to her? "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" she cried; but what had she to do with the Son of David? and what had the Son of David to do with a Canaanite? When He reigns as David's Son, there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts. Judgment will have early cut them off. But the Lord could not send her away without a blessing, and without a blessing reaching to His own glory. Instead of giving her at once a reply, He leads her on step by step; for so He can stoop. Such is His grace, such His wisdom. The woman at last meets the heart and mind of Jesus in the sense of all her utter nothingness before God; and then grace, which had wrought all up to this, though pent-up, can flow like a river; and the Lord can admire her faith, albeit from Himself, God's free gift.

In the end of this chapter (15) is another miracle of Christ's feeding a vast multitude. It does not seem exactly as a pictorial view of what the Lord was doing, or going to do, but rather the repeated pledge, that they were not to suppose that the evil He had judged in the elders of Jerusalem, or the grace freely going out to the Gentiles, in any way led Him. to forget His ancient people. What special mercy and tenderness, not only in the end, but also in the way the Lord deals with Israel!

In Matthew 16 we advance a great step, spite (yea, because) of unbelief, deep and manifest, now on every side. The Lord has nothing for them, or for Him, but to go right on to the end. He had brought out the kingdom before in view of that which betrayed to Him the unpardonable blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. The old

people and work then closed in principle, and a new work of God in the kingdom of heaven was disclosed. Now He brings out not the kingdom merely, but His Church; and this not merely in view of hopeless unbelief in the mass, but of the confession of His own intrinsic glory as the Son of God by the chosen witness. No sooner had Peter pronounced to Jesus the truth of His person, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," than Jesus holds the secret no longer. "Upon this rock," says He, "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He also gives Peter the keys of the kingdom, as we see afterwards. But first appears the new and great fact, that Christ was going to build a new building, His assembly, on the truth and confession of Himself, the Son of God. Doubtless, it was contingent upon the utter ruin of Israel through their unbelief; but the fall of the lesser thing opened the way for the gift of a better glory in answer to Peter's faith in the glory of His person. The Father and the Son have their appropriate part, even as we know from elsewhere the Spirit sent down from heaven in due time was to have His. Had Peter confessed who the Son of man really is? It was the Father's revelation of the Son; flesh and blood had not revealed it to Peter, but, "my Father, which is in heaven." Thereon the Lord also has His word to say, first reminding Peter of his new name suitably to what follows. He was going to build His Church "upon this rock" — Himself, the Son of God. Henceforth, too, He forbids the disciples to proclaim Him as the Messiah. That was all over for the moment through Israel's blind sin; He was going to suffer, not yet reign, at Jerusalem. Then, alas! we have in Peter what man is, even after all this. He who had just confessed the glory of the Lord would not hear His Master speaking thus of His going to

the cross (by which alone the Church, or even the kingdom, could be established), and sought to swerve Him from it. But the single eye of Jesus at once detects the snare of Satan into which natural thought led, or at least exposed, Peter to fall. And so, as savouring not divine but human things, he is bid to go behind (not from) the Lord as one ashamed of Him. He, on the contrary, insists not only that He was bound for the cross, but that its truth must be made good in any who will come after Him. The glory of Christ's person strengthens us, not only to understand His cross, but to take up ours.

In Matthew 17 another scene appears, promised in part to some standing there in Matt. 16:28, and connected, though as yet hiddenly, with the cross. It is the glory of Christ; not so much as Son of the living God, but as the exalted Son of man, who once suffered here below. Nevertheless, when there was the display of the glory of the kingdom, the Father's voice proclaimed Him as His own Son, and not merely as the man thus exalted. It was not more truly Christ's kingdom as man than He was God's own Son, His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased, who was now to be heard, rather than Moses or Elias, who disappear, leaving Jesus alone with the chosen witnesses.

Then the pitiable condition of the disciples at the foot of the hill, where Satan reigned in fallen ruined man, is tested by the fact, that notwithstanding all the glory of Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, the disciples rendered it evident that they knew not how to bring His grace into action for others; yet was it precisely their place and proper function here below. The Lord, however, in the same chapter, shows that it was not a

question alone of what was to be done, or to be suffered, or is to be by-and-by, but what He was, and is, and never can but be. This came out most blessedly through the disciples. Peter, the good confessor of chapter 16, cuts but a sorry figure in chapter 17; for when the demand was made upon him as to his Master's paying the tax, surely the Lord, he gave them to know, was much too good a Jew to omit it. But our Lord with dignity demands of Peter, "What thinkest thou, Simon?" He evinces, that at the very time when Peter forgot the vision and the Father's voice, virtually reducing Him to mere man, He was God manifest in the flesh. It is always thus. God proves what He is by the revelation of Jesus. "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter answers, "Of strangers." "Then," said the Lord, "are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, 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." Is it not most sweet to see, that He who proves His divine glory at once associates us with Himself? Who but God could command not only the waves, but the fish of the sea? As to any one else, even the most liberal gift that ever was given of God to fallen man on earth, to the golden head of the Gentiles, exempted the deep and its untamed inhabitants. If Psalm 8 goes farther, surely that was for the Son of man, who for the suffering of death was exalted. Yes, it was His to rule and command the sea, even as the land and all that in them is. Neither did He need to wait for His exaltation as man; for He was ever God, and God's Son, who therefore, if one may so say, waits for nothing, for no day of glory. The manner, too, was in itself remarkable. A

hook is cast into the sea, and the fish that takes it produces the required money for Peter as for his gracious Master and Lord. A fish was the last being for man to make his banker of; with God all things are possible, who knew how to blend admirably in the same act divine glory, unanswerably vindicated, with the lowliest grace in man. And thus He, whose glory was so forgotten by His disciples — Jesus, Himself — thinks of that very disciple, and says, "For me and thee."

The next chapter (Matt. 18) takes up the double thought of the kingdom and the Church, showing the requisite for entrance into the kingdom, and displaying or calling forth divine grace in the most lovely manner, and that in practice. The pattern is the Son of man saving the lost. It is not a question of bringing in law to govern the kingdom or guide the Church. The unparalleled grace of the Saviour must form and fashion the saints henceforth. In the end of the chapter is set forth parabolically the unlimited forgiveness that suits the kingdom; here, I cannot but think, looking onward in strict fulness to the future, but with distinct application to the moral need of the disciples then and always. In the kingdom so much the less sparing is the retribution of those who despise or abuse grace. All turns on that which was suitable to such a God, the giver of His own Son. We need not dwell upon it.

Matthew 19 brings in another lesson of great weight. Whatever might be the Church or the kingdom, it is precisely when the Lord unfolds His new glory in both the kingdom and the Church that He maintains the proprieties of nature in their rights and integrity. There is no greater mistake than to suppose, because there is the richest development of God's grace in new things,

that He abandons or weakens natural relationships and authority in their place. This, I believe, is a great lesson, and too often forgotten. Observe that it is at this point the chapter begins with vindicating the sanctity of marriage. No doubt it is a tie of nature for this life only. None the less does the Lord uphold it, purged of what accretions had come in to obscure its original and proper character. Thus the fresh revelations of grace in no way detract from that which God had of old established in nature; but, contrariwise, only impart a new and greater force in asserting the real value and wisdom of God's way even in these least things. A similar principle applies to the little children, who are next introduced; and the same thing is true substantially of natural or moral character here below. Parents, and the disciples, like the Pharisees, were shown that grace, just because it is the expression of what God is to a ruined world, takes notice of what man in his own imaginary dignity might count altogether petty. With God, as nothing is impossible, so no one, small or great, is despised: all is seen and put in its just place; and grace, which rebukes creature pride, can afford to deal divinely with the smallest as with the greatest.

If there be a privilege more manifest than another which has dawned on us, it is what we have found by and in Jesus, that now we can say nothing is too great for us, nothing too little for God. There is room also for the most thorough self-abnegation. Grace forms the hearts of those that understand it, according to the great manifestation of what God is, and what man is, too, given us in the person of Christ. In the reception of the little children this is plain; it is not so generally seen in what follows. The rich young ruler was not converted:

far from being so, he could not stand the test applied by Christ out of His own love, and, as we are told, "went away sorrowful." He was ignorant of himself, because ignorant of God, and imagined that it was only a question of man's doing good for God. In this he had laboured, as he said, from his youth up: "What lack I yet?" There was the consciousness of good unattained, a void for which he appeals to Jesus that it might be filled up. To lose all for heavenly treasure, to come and follow the despised Nazarene here below — what was it to compare with that which had brought Jesus to earth? but it was far too much for the young man. It was the creature doing his best, yet proving that he loved the creature more than the Creator. Jesus, nevertheless, owned all that could be owned in him. After this, in the chapter we have the positive hindrance asserted of what man counts good. "Verily, I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." This made it to be plainly and only a difficulty for God to solve. Then comes the boast of Peter, though for others as well as himself. The Lord, while thoroughly proving that He forgot nothing, owned everything that was of grace in Peter or the rest, while opening the same door to "every one" who forsakes nature for His name's sake, solemnly adds, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." Thus the point that meets us in the conclusion of the chapter is, that while every character, every measure of giving up for His name's sake, will meet with the most worthy recompence and result, man can as little judge of this as he can accomplish salvation. Changes, to us inexplicable, occur: many first last, and last first.

The point in the beginning of the next chapter (Matt. 20) is not reward, but the right and title of God Himself to act according to His goodness. He is not going to lower Himself to a human measure. Not only shall the Judge of all the earth do right, but what will not He do who gives all good? "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 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." He maintains His sovereign title to do good, to do as He will with His own. The first of these lessons is, "Many first shall be last, and last first." (Matt. 19:30.) It is clearly the failure of nature, the reversal of what might be expected. The second is, "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few are chosen." It is the power of grace. God's delight is to pick out the hindmost for the first place, to the disparagement of the foremost in their own strength.

Lastly, we have the Lord rebuking the ambition not only of the sons of Zebedee, but in truth also of the ten; for why was there such warmth of indignation against the two brethren? why not sorrow and shame that they should have so little understood their Master's mind? How often the heart shows itself, not merely by what we ask, but by the uncalled-for feelings we display against other people and their faults! The fact is, in judging others we judge ourselves.

Here I close tonight. It brings me to the real crisis; that is, the final presentation of our lord to Jerusalem. I have endeavoured, though, of course, cursorily, and I feel most imperfectly, to give thus far Matthew's sketch of the Saviour as the Holy Ghost enabled him to execute it. In the next discourse we may hope to have the rest of his gospel.

Matthew 20:29 - 28.

We now enter on the Lord's final presentation of Himself to Jerusalem, traced, however, from Jericho; that is, from the city which had once been the stronghold of the power of the Canaanite. The Lord Jesus presenting Himself in grace, instead of sealing up the curse which had been pronounced on it, makes it contrariwise the witness of His mercy towards those who believed in Israel. It was there that two blind men (for Matthew, we have seen, abounds in this double token of the Lord's grace), sitting by the wayside, cried out, and most appropriately, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" They were led and taught of God. It was no question of law, yet strictly in His capacity of Messiah. Their appeal was in thorough keeping with the scene; they felt that the nation had no sense of its own blindness, and so addressed themselves at once to the Lord thus presenting Himself where divine power wrought of old. It is remarkable that, although there had been signs and wonders given from time to time in Israel, miraculous cures wrought, dead even raised to life, and leprosy cleansed, yet never, previously to the Messiah, do we hear of restoring the blind to sight. The Rabbis held that this was reserved for the Messiah; and certainly I am not aware of any case which contradicts

their notion. They appear to have founded it upon the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah. (Isa. 35) I do not affirm that the prophecy proves their notion to be true in isolating that miracle from the rest; but it is evident that the Spirit of God does connect emphatically the opening of blind eyes with the Son of David, as part of the blessing that He will surely diffuse when He comes to reign over the earth.

What appears further here is, that Jesus does not put the blessing off till His reign. Undoubtedly, the Lord in those days was giving signs and tokens of the world to come; and it was continued by His servants afterwards, as we know from the end of Mark, the Acts, etc. The miraculous powers which He exercised were samples of the power which would fill the earth with Jehovah's glory, casting out the enemy, and effacing the traces of his power, and making it the theatre of the manifestation of His kingdom here below. Thus our Lord gives evidence that the power was in Himself already, so that they need not lack because the kingdom was not yet come, in the full, manifest sense of the word. The kingdom was then come in His own person, as is said by Matthew (Matt. 12) as well as Luke. Still less did the blessing tarry for the sons of men. Virtue went forth at His kingly touch: this, at least, did not depend on the recognition of His claims by His people. He takes up this sign of Messiah's grace — the opening of the eyes of the blind, — itself no mean sign of the true condition of the Jews, could they but feel and own the truth. Alas! they sought not mercy and healing at His hands; but if there were any to call on Him at Jericho, the Lord would hearken. Here, then, Messiah answers to the cry of faith of these two blind men. When the multitude rebuked

them, that they should hold their peace, they cried the more. The difficulties presented to faith only increased the energy of its desire; and so they cried, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Jesus stands, calls the blind men, and says, "What will ye that I should do?" "Lord, that our eyes should be opened." And so it was according to their faith. Moreover, it is noted that.they follow Him, the pledge of what will be done when the people, by-and-by owning their blindness, and turning to Him for eyes, receive sight from the true Son of David to see Himself in the day of His earthly glory.

Matthew 21. The Lord thereon enters Jerusalem according to prophecy. He enters it, however, not in the outward pomp and glory which the nations seek after, but according to what the prophet's words now made good literally: Jehovah's King sitting on an ass in the spirit of humiliation. But even in this very thing, the fullest proof was afforded that He was Jehovah Himself. From first to last, as we have seen, it was Jehovah-Messiah. The word to the owner of the ass and colt was, "The Lord hath need of them." Accordingly, on this plea of Jehovah of hosts, all difficulties disappear, though unbelief finds there its stumbling-block. It was indeed the power of the Spirit of God that controlled his heart; even as to Christ "the porter opened." God left nothing undone on any side, but so ordered that the heart of this Israelite should yield a testimony that grace was at work, spite of the lamentable chill that stupefied the people. How good it is thus to raise up a witness, never indeed to leave it absolutely lacking, not even on the road to Jerusalem — alas! the road to the cross of Christ. This, as we are told by the evangelist, came to pass that the word of the prophet should be fulfilled: "Tell ye the

daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek [for such meekness was the character of His presentation as yet], and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." All must be in character with the Nazarene. Accordingly, the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded. The multitudes, too, were acted on — a very great multitude. It was, of course, but a transient action, yet was it of God for a testimony, this moving of hearts by the Spirit. Not that it penetrated beneath the surface, but was rather a wave that passed over men's hearts, and then was gone. For the moment they followed, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" (applying to the Lord the congratulations of Ps. 118)

Jesus, according to our evangelist's account, comes to the temple and cleanses it. Remark the order as well as character of the events. In Mark this is not the first act which is recorded, but the curse on the barren fig tree, between His inspection of all things in the temple and His ejection of those who profaned it. The fact is, there were two days or occasions in which the fig tree comes before us, according to the gospel of Mark, who gives us the details more particularly than any one, notwithstanding his brevity. Matthew, on the contrary, while he is so careful in furnishing us frequently with a double witness of the Lord's gracious ways toward His land and people, gives only as one whole His dealing with both the fig tree and the temple. We should not know from the first evangelist of any interval in either case; nor could we learn from either the first or the third but that the cleansing of the temple occurred on His earlier visit. But we know from Mark, who sets forth an

exact account of each of the two days, that in neither case was all done at once. This is the more remarkable because, in the instances of the two demoniacs, or the two blind men in Matthew, Mark, like Luke, speaks only of one. Nothing can account for such phenomena but design; and the more so as there is no ground to assume that each succeeding evangelist was kept in ignorance of his predecessor's account of our Lord. It is evident that Matthew compresses in one the two acts about the temple, as well as about the fig tree. His scope excluded such details, and, I am persuaded, rightly so, according to the mind of God's Spirit. It may render it all the more striking when one observes that Matthew was there, and Mark was not. He who actually saw these transactions, and who therefore, had he been a mere acting human witness, would peculiarly have dwelt on them; he, too, who had been a personal companion of the Lord, and therefore, had it been only a question of treasuring all up as one that loved the Lord, would, naturally speaking, have been the one of the three to have presented the amplest and minutest picture of the circumstance, is just the one who does nothing of the kind. Mark, as confessedly not being an eye-witness, might have been supposed to content himself with the general view. The reverse is the fact unquestionably. This is a notable feature, and not here alone, but elsewhere also. To me it proves that the gospels are the fruit of divine purpose in all, distinctively in each. It establishes the principle that, while God condescended to employ eye-witness, He never confined Himself to it, but, on the contrary, took full and particular care to shew that He is above all creature means of information. Thus it is in Mark and Luke we find some of the most important details; not in Matthew and John, though Matthew and John were

eyewitnesses, Mark and Luke not. A double proof of this appears in what has been just advanced. To Matthew, acting according to what was given him of the Spirit, there was no sufficient reason to enter into points which did not bear dispensationally upon Israel. He therefore, as often elsewhere, presents the entrance into the temple in its completeness, as being the sole matter important to his aim. Any thoughtful mind must allow, if I do not greatly err, that entrance into detail would rather detract from the augustness of the act. The minute account has its just place, on the other hand, if it be a question of the Lord's method and bearing in His service and testimony. Here I want to know the particulars; there every trace and shade are full of instruction to me. If I have to serve Him, I do well to learn and ponder His every word and way; and in this the style and mode of Mark's gospel is invaluable. Who but feels that the movements, the pauses, the sighs, the groans, the very looks of the Lord, are fraught with blessing to the soul? But if, as with Matthew, the object be the great change of dispensation consequent on the rejection of the divine Messiah, (particularly if the point, as here, be not the opening out of coming mercy, but, on the contrary, a solemn and a stern judgment on Israel,) the Spirit of God contents Himself with a general notice of the painful scene, without indulging in any circumstantial account of it. To this it is I attribute the palpable difference in this place of Matthew as compared with Mark, and with Luke also, who omits the cursed fig tree altogether, and gives the barest mention of the temple's cleansing (Matt. 19:45). The notion of some men, especially a few men of learning, that the difference is due to ignorance on the part of one or other or all the evangelists, is of all explanations the worst,

and even the least reasonable (to take the lowest ground); it is in plain truth the proof of their own ignorance, and the effect of positive unbelief. What I have ventured to suggest I believe to be a motive, and an adequate motive, for the difference; but we must remember that divine wisdom has depths of aim infinitely beyond our ability to sound. God may be pleased to vouchsafe us a perception of what is in His mind, if we be lowly, and diligent., and dependent on Him; or He may leave us ignorant of much, where we are careless or self-confident; but sure I am that the very points men ordinarily fix on as blots or imperfections in the inspired word are, when understood, among the strongest proofs of the admirable guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. Nor do I speak with such assurance because of the least satisfaction in any attainments, but because every lesson I have learnt and do learn from God's word brings with it the ever accumulating conviction that Scripture is perfect. For the question in hand, it is enough to produce sufficient evidence that it was not in ignorance, but with full knowledge, that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote as they have done; I go farther, and say it was divine intention, rather than, as I conceive, any determinate plan of each evangelist, who may not himself have had before his mind the full scope of what the Holy Ghost gave him to write about it. There is no necessity to suppose that Matthew deliberately designed the result which we have in his gospel. How God brought it all to pass is another question, which, of course, it is not for us to answer. But the fact is, that the evangelist, who was present, he who consequently was an eyewitness of the details, does not give them; while one who was not there states them with the greatest particularity — thoroughly harmonious with the account

of him who was there, but, nevertheless, with differences as marked as their mutual corroborations. If we might rightly use, in this case, the word "originality," then originality is stamped upon the account of the second. I affirm, then, in the strictest sense, that divine design is stamped upon each, and that consistency of purpose is found everywhere in all the gospels.

The Lord then goes straight to the sanctuary. The kingly Son of David, destined to sit as the Priest upon His throne, the head of all things sacred as well as pertaining to the polity of Israel, — we can understand why Matthew should describe such an One visiting the temple of Jerusalem; and why, instead of stopping, like Mark, to narrate that which attests His patient service, the whole scene should be given here without a break. We have seen that a similar principle accounts for the massing of the facts of His ministry in the end of the fourth chapter, and also for giving as a continuous whole the Sermon on the Mount, although, if we enquired into details, we might find many and considerable intervals; for, as undoubtedly those facts were grouped, so I believe also it was between the parts of that sermon. It fell in, however, with the object of Matthew's gospel to pass by all notice of these interstices, and so the Spirit of God has been pleased to interweave the whole into the beautiful web of the first gospel. In this way, as I believe, we may and should account for the difference between Matthew and Mark in this particular, without in the smallest degree casting the shadow of an imperfection upon one any more than on the other; while the fact, already pressed, that eye-witnessing, while employed as a servant, is never allowed to govern in the composition of the gospels, bespeaks loudly that

men forget their true Author in searching into the writers He employed, and that the only key to all difficulties is the simple but weighty truth that it was God communicating His mind about Jesus, as by Matthew so by Mark.

Next, the Lord acts upon the word. He finds men selling and buying in the temple (that is, in its buildings) overthrows their tables, and turns out themselves, pronouncing the words of the prophets, both Isaiah and Jeremiah. But at the same time there is another trait noted here only: the blind and the lame (the "hated of David's soul," 2 Sam. 5:8) the pitied of David's greater Son and Lord) find a friend instead of an enemy in Him who loved them, the true beloved of God. Thus, at the very time He showed His hatred and righteous indignation at the covetous profaning of the temple, His love was flowing out to the desolate in Israel. Then we see the chief priests and scribes offended at the cries of the multitude and children, and turning reproachfully to the Lord, who allowed such a right royal welcome to be addressed to Him; but the Lord calmly takes His place according to the sure word of God. It is not now Deuteronomy that is before Him (that He had quoted when tempted of Satan at the beginning of His career). But now, as they had borrowed the words of Psalm 118 (and who will say they were wrong?), so the Lord Jesus (and I say He was infinitely right) applies to them, as well as to Himself, the language of Psalm 8. Its central truth is the entrance of the rejected Messiah, the Son of man by humiliation and suffering unto death, into heavenly glory and dominion over all things. And this was just the point before the Lord: the little ones were thus in the truth and spirit of that oracle. They were

sucklings, out of whose mouth praise was ordained for the despised Messiah soon to be in heaven, exalted there and preached here as the once crucified and now glorified Son of man. What could be more appropriate to that time, what more profoundly true for all time, yea, for eternity?

Matthew, as we have seen, crowds into one scene all mention of the barren fig tree (ver. 18-22), without distinguishing the curse of the one day from the manifestation of its accomplishment on the day following. Was it without moral import? Impossible. Did it convey the notion of a hearty and true reception of the Messiah, with fruits meet for His hand who had so long tended it, and failed in no care or culture? Was there anything answering to the welcome of the little ones who cried Hosanna, the type of what grace will effect in the day of His return, when the nation itself will contentedly, thankfully take the place of babes and sucklings, and find their best wisdom in so owning the One whom their fathers rejected, the man thereon exalted to heaven during the night of His people's unbelief? Meanwhile, another picture better suits them, the state and the doom of the fruitless fig tree. Why so scornful of the jubilant multitude, of the joyous babes? What was their condition before the eyes of Him who saw all that passed within their minds? They were no better than that fig tree, that solitary fig tree which met the Lord's eyes as He comes from Bethany, entering once more into Jerusalem. Like it, they, too, were full of promise; like its abundant foliage, they lacked not fair profession, but there was no fruit. That which made its barrenness evident was the fact that it was not yet the time of figs. Therefore, the unripe figs, the harbinger of

harvest, ought to have been there. Had the season of figs been come, the fruit might have been already gathered; but that season having not yet arrived, beyond controversy the promise of the coming harvest should, and indeed must, have been still there, had any fruit been really borne. This, therefore, represented too truly what the Jew, what the nation, was in the eye of the Lord. He had come seeking fruit; but there was none; and the Lord pronounced this curse, "Henceforth let no fruit grow on thee for ever." And so it is. No fruit ever sprang from that generation. Another generation there must be; a total change must be wrought if there is to be fruit-bearing. Fruit of righteousness can only be through Jesus to God's glory; and Jesus they yet despised. Not that the Lord will give up Israel, but He will create a generation to come — wholly different from the present Christ-rejecting one. Such an issue will be seen to be implied, if we compare our Lord's curse with the rest of the word of God, which points to better things yet in store for Israel.

But He adds more than this. It was not only that the Israel of that day should thus pass away, giving place to another generation, who, honouring the Messiah, will bear fruit to God; He tells the wondering disciples that, had they faith, the mountain would be cast into the sea. This appears to go farther than the disappearance of Israel as responsible to be a fruit-bearing people; it implies their whole polity dissolved; for the mountain is just as much the symbol of a power in the earth, an established world-power, as the fig tree is the special sign of Israel as responsible to produce' fruit for God; and it is clear that both figures have been abundantly verified. For the time Israel is passed away. After no long

interval, the disciples saw Jerusalem not only taken, but completely torn as it were from the roots. The Romans came, as the executioners of the sentence of God (according to the just forebodings of the unjust high priest Caiaphas, who prophesied not without the Holy Ghost), and took away their place and nation, not because they did not, but because they did, kill Jesus their Messiah. Notoriously this total ruin of the Jewish state came to pass when the disciples had grown up to be 'a public witness to the world, before the apostles were all taken away from the earth; then their whole national polity sunk and disappeared when Titus sacked Jerusalem, and sold and scattered the people to the ends of the earth. I have no doubt that the Lord intended us to know the uprooting of the mountain just as much as the withering of the fig tree. The latter may be the simpler application of the two, and evidently more familiar to ordinary thought; but there seems no real reason to question, that if the one be meant symbolically, so too is the other. However this may be, these words of the Lord close that part of the subject.

We enter upon a new series in the rest of this chapter and the next. The religious rulers come before the Lord to put the first question that ever enters the minds of such men, "By what authority doest thou these things?" Nothing is more easily asked by those who assume that their own title is unimpeachable. Our Lord answers them by another question, which soon disclosed how thoroughly they themselves, in what was incomparably more serious, failed in moral competence. Who were they, to raise the question of His authority? As guides of religion, surely they ought to be able to decide that which was of the deepest consequence for their own

souls, and for those of whom they assumed the spiritual charge. The question He puts involved indeed the answer to theirs; for had they answered Him in truth, this would have decided at once by what, and by whose, authority He acted as He did. "The baptism of John, whence was it (asks the Lord), from heaven, or of men?" There was no singleness of purpose, there was no fear of God, in these men so full of swelling words and fancied authority. Accordingly, instead of its being an answer from conscience declaring the truth as it was, they reason solely how to escape from the dilemma. The only question before their minds was, what answer would be politic? how best to get rid of the difficulty? Vain hope with Jesus! The base conclusion to which they were reduced is, "We cannot tell." It was a falsehood: but what of that, where the interests of religion and their own order were concerned? Without a blush, then, they answer the Saviour, "We cannot tell;" and the Lord with calm dignity strikes home His answer — not, "I cannot tell," but, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Jesus knew and laid bare the secret springs of the heart; and the Spirit of God records it here for our instruction. It is the genuine universal type of worldly leaders of religion in conflict with the power of God. "If we shall say, From heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not, then, believe him? But if we shall say, Of men, we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet." If they owned John, they must bow to the authority of Jesus; if they rejected John, they feared the people. They were thus put to silence; for they would not risk loss of influence with the people, and they were determined at all cost to deny the authority of Jesus. All they cared about was themselves.

The Lord goes on and meets parabolically a wider question than that of the rulers, gradually enlarging the scope, till He terminates these instructions in Matt. 22:14. First, He takes up sinful men where natural conscience works, and where conscience is gone. This is peculiar to Matthew: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went." He comes to the second, who was all complacency, and answers to the call, "I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto Him, The first. Jesus saith unto them [such is the application], Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, 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." (Matt. 21:28-32.) But He was not content with merely thus touching conscience in a way that was painful enough to the flesh; for they found that, spite of authority or anything else, those who professed most, if disobedient, were counted worse than the most depraved, who repented and did the will of God.

Next, our Lord looks at the entire people, and this from the commencement of their relations with God. In other words, He gives us in this parable the history of God's dealings with them. It was in no, way, so to speak, the accidental circumstance of how they behaved in one particular generation. The Lord sets out clearly what they had been all along, and what they were then. In the parable of the vineyard, they are tested as responsible in view of the claims of God, who had blessed them from

the first with exceeding rich privileges. Then, in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, we see what they were, as tested by the grace or gospel of God. These are the two subjects of the parables following.

The householder, who lets out his vineyard to husbandmen, sets forth God trying the Jew, on the ground of blessings abundantly conferred upon him. Accordingly we have, first, servants sent, and then more, — not only in vain, but with insult and increase of wrong. Then, at length, He sends His Son, saying, They will reverence my Son. This gives occasion for their crowning sin — the utter rejection of all divine claims, in the death of the Son and Heir; for "they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." "When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes," He asks, "what will he do unto these husbandmen?" They say unto Him, "He will miserably destroy these wicked men, and let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

The Lord accordingly pronounces according to the Scriptures, not leaving it merely to the answer of the conscience, "Did ye never read 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?" Then He applies further this prediction about the stone, connecting, it would appear, the allusion in Psalm 118 with the prophecy of Daniel 2. The principle at least is applied to the case in hand, and, I need hardly say, with perfect truth and beauty; for in that day apostate Jews will be judged and destroyed, as well as Gentile powers. In two positions the stone was to be found. The one is here on the earth — the humiliation, to wit, of the Messiah. Upon that Stone,

thus humbled, unbelief trips and falls. But, again, when the Stone is exalted, another issue follows; for" the Stone of Israel," the glorified Son of man, shall descend in unsparing judgment, and crush His enemies together. When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them.

The Lord, however, turns in the next parable to the call of grace. It is a likeness of the kingdom of heaven. Here we are on new ground. It is striking to see this parable introduced here. In the gospel of Luke there is a similar one, though it might be too much to affirm that it is the same. Certainly an analogous parable is found, but in a totally different connection. Besides, Matthew adds various particulars peculiar to himself, and quite falling in with the Spirit's desire by him; as we find also in Luke his own characteristics. Thus, in Luke, there is a remarkable display of grace and love to the despised poor in Israel; then, further, that love enlarging its sphere, and going out to the highways and hedges to bring in the poor that were there — the poor in the city — the poor everywhere. I need not say how thoroughly in character all this is. Here, in Matthew, we have not only God's grace, but a kind of history, very strikingly embracing the destruction of Jerusalem, on which Luke is here silent. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son." It is not merely a man making a feast for those that have nothing — that we have fully in Luke; but here rather the king bent upon the glorification of his son. "He sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saving, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my

fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." There are two missions of the servants of the Lord here: one during His lifetime; the other after His death. On the second mission, not the first, it is said, "All things are ready." The message is, as ever, despised. "They made light of it, and went their ways." It was the second time when there was this most ample invitation which left no excuse for man, that they not only would not come, going one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, but "the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them," This was not the character of the reception given to the apostles during our Lord's lifetime, but exactly what transpired after His death. Thereupon, though in marvellous patience the blow was suspended for years, nevertheless judgment came at last. "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." This, of course, closes this part of the parable as predicting a providential dealing of God; but, besides being thus judicial after a sort to which we find nothing parallel in the gospel of Luke (i.e., in what answers to it), as usual, the great change of dispensation is shown in Matthew much more distinctly than in Luke. There it is rather the idea of grace that began with one sending out to those invited, and a very full exposure of their excuses in a moral point of view, followed by the second mission to the streets and lanes of the city, for the poor, maimed, halt, and blind; and finally, to the highways and hedges, compelling them to come in that the house might be filled. In Matthew it is very much more in a dispensational aspect; and hence the dealings with the Jews, both in mercy and judgment, are first given as a whole, according to that manner of his which furnishes a

complete sketch at one stroke, so to speak. It is the more manifest here, because none can deny that the mission to the Gentiles was long before the destruction of Jerusalem. Next is appended the Gentile part to itself. "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 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: and the wedding was furnished with guests." But there is a further thing brought out here, in a very distinctive manner. In Luke, we have no judgment pronounced and executed at the end upon him that came to the wedding without the due garment. In Matthew, as we saw the providential dealing with the Jews, so we find the closing scene very particularly described, when the king judges individually in the day that is coming. It is not an external or national stroke, though that too we have here — a providential event in connection with Israel. Quite different, but consistent with that, we have a personal appraisal by God of the Gentile profession, of those now bearing Christ's name, but who have not really put on Christ. Such is the conclusion of the parable: nothing more appropriate at the same time than this picture, peculiar to Matthew, who depicts the vast chance at hand for the Gentiles, and God's dealing with them individually for their abuse of His grace. The parable illustrates the coming change of dispensation. Now this falls in with Matthew's design, rather than Luke's, with whom we shall find habitually it is a question of moral features, which the Lord may give opportunity of exhibiting at another time.

After this come the various classes of Jews — the Pharisees first of all, and, strange consorts! the Herodians. Ordinarily they were, as men say, natural enemies. The Pharisees were the high ecclesiastical party; the Herodians, on the contrary, were the low worldly courtier party: those, the strong sticklers for tradition and righteousness according to the law; these, the panderers to the powers that then were for whatever could be got in the earth. Such allies now joined hypocritically against the Lord. The Lord meets them with that wisdom which always shines in His words and ways. They demand whether it be lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not. "Show me," says He, "the tribute money..... And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Thus the Lord deals with the facts as they then came before Him. The piece of money they produced proved their subjection to the Gentiles. It was their sin which had put them there. They writhed under their masters; but still under alien masters they were; and it was because of their sin. The Lord confronts them not only with the undeniable witness of their subjection to the Romans, but also with a graver charge still, which they had entirely overlooked — the claims of God, as well as of Caesar. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." The money you love proclaims that you are slaves to Caesar. Pay, then, to Caesar his dues. But forget not to "render to God the things that are God's." The fact was, they hated Caesar only less than they hated the true God. The Lord left them therefore under the reflections and confusion of their own guilty consciences.

Next, the Lord is assailed by another great party. "The same day came to him the Sadducees" — those most opposed to the Pharisees in doctrine, as the Herodians were in politics. The Sadducees denied resurrection, and put a case which to their mind involved insuperable difficulties. To whom would belong in that state a woman who here had been married to seven brethren successively? The Lord does not cite the clearest Scripture about the resurrection; He does what in the circumstances is much better; He appeals to what they themselves professed most of all to revere. To the Sadducee there was no part of Scripture possessed of such authority as the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses. From Moses, then, He proved the resurrection; and this in the simplest possible way. Every one — their own conscience — must allow that God is the God, not of the dead, but of the living. Therefore, if God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is not an unmeaning thing. Referring long afterwards to their fathers who were passed away, He speaks of Himself as in relationship with them. Were they not, then, dead? But was all gone? Not so. But far more than that, — He speaks as one who not merely had relations with them, but had made promises to them, which never yet were accomplished. Either, then, God must raise them from the dead, in order to make good His promises to the fathers; or He could not be careful to keep His promises. Was this last what their faith in God, or rather their want of faith, came to? To deny resurrection is, therefore, to deny the promises, and God's faithfulness, and in truth God Himself. The Lord, therefore, rebukes them on this acknowledged principle, that God was the God of the living, not of the dead. To make Him God of the dead would have been really to deny Him to be God

at all: equally so to make His promises of no value or stability. God, therefore, must raise again the fathers in order to fulfil His promise to them; for they certainly never got the promises in this life. The folly — of their thoughts too was manifest in this, that the difficulty presented was wholly unreal — it only existed in their imagination. Marriage has nothing to do with the risen state: there they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. Thus, on their own negative ground of objection, they were altogether in error. Positively, as we have seen, they were just as wrong; for God must raise the dead to make good His own promises. There is nothing now in this world that worthily witnesses God, save only that which is known to faith; but if you speak of the display of God, and the manifestation of His power, you must wait until the resurrection. The Sadducees had not faith, and hence were in total error and blindness: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Therefore it was that, refusing to believe, they were unable to understand. When the resurrection comes, it will be manifest to every eye. Accordingly this was the point of our Lord's answer; and the multitudes were astonished at His doctrine.

Though the Pharisees were not sorry to find the then ruling party, the Sadducees, put to silence, one of them, a lawyer, tempted the Lord in a question of near interest to them. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" But He who came full of grace and truth never lowered the law, and at once gives its sum and substance in both its parts — Godward and manward.

The time, however, was come for Jesus to put His question, drawn from Psalm 110. If Christ be

confessedly David's Son, how does David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?" The whole truth of His position lies here. It was about to be realized; and the Lord can speak of the things that were not as though they were. Such was the language of David the king in words inspired of the Holy Ghost. What was the language, the thought of the people now, and by whom inspired? Alas! Pharisees, lawyers, Sadducees — it was only a question of infidelity in varying forms; and the glory of David's Lord was even more momentous than the dead rising according to promise. Believe it or not, the Messiah was about to take His seat at the right hand of Jehovah. They were — indeed, they are — critical questions: If the Christ be David's Son, how is He David's Lord? If He be David's Lord, how is He David's Son? It is the turning point of unbelief at all times, now as then, the continual theme of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the habitual stumbling-block of man, never so vain as when he would be wisest, and either essay to sound by his own wit the unfathomable mystery of Christ's person, or deny that there is in it any mystery whatever. It was the very point of Jewish unbelief It was the grand capital truth of all this gospel of Matthew, that He who was the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, was really Emmanuel, and Jehovah. It had been proved at His birth, proved throughout His ministry in Galilee, proved now at His last presentation in Jerusalem. "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions." Such was their position in presence of Him who was so soon about to take His seat at the right hand of God; and there each remains to this day. Awful, unbelieving silence of Israel

despising their own law, despising their own Messiah, David's Son and David's Lord, His glory their shame!

But if man was silent, it was the Lord's place not merely to question but to pronounce; and in Matthew 23 most solemnly does the Lord utter His sentence upon Israel. It was an address both to the multitude and to the disciples, with woes for Scribes and Pharisees. The Lord fully sanctioned that kind of mingled address for the time, providing, it would appear, not merely for the disciples, but for the remnant in a future day who will have this ambiguous place; believers in Him, on the one hand, yet withal filled, on the. other, with Jewish hopes and Jewish associations. This seems to me the reason why our Lord speaks in a manner so remarkably different from that which obtains ordinarily in Scripture. "The scribes," He says, "and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens, 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 to be seen of men." The principle fully applied then, as it will in the latter day; the Church scene coming in meanwhile as a parenthesis. The suitability of such instruction to this gospel of Matthew is also obvious, as indeed here only it is found. Then, again, our souls would shrink from the notion, that what our Lord taught could have merely a passing application. Not so; it has a permanent value for His followers; save only that the special privileges conferred on the Church, which is His body, modify the case, and, concurrently with this, the setting aside meanwhile of the Jewish people and state of things. But

as these words applied literally then, so I conceive will it be at a future day. If this be so, it preserves the dignity of the Lord, as the great Prophet and Teacher, in its true place. In the last book of the New Testament we have a similar combination of features, when the Church will have disappeared from the earth; that is, the keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus. So here, the disciples of Jesus are exhorted to heed what was enjoined by those who sat in Moses' seat — to follow what they taught, not what they did. So far as they brought out God's commandments, it was obligatory. But their practice was to be a beacon, not a guide. Their objects were to be seen of men, pride of place, honour in public and private, high-sounding titles, in open contradiction of Christ and that oft-repeated word of His — "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall bumble himself shall be exalted." Yet, of course, the disciples had the faith of Jesus.

Next the Lord1 launches out woe after woe against the Scribes and Pharisees. They were hypocrites. They shut out the new light of God, while zealous beyond measure for their own thoughts; they undermined conscience by their casuistry, while insisting on the minutest alliteration in ceremonializing; they laboured after external cleanness, while full of rapine and intemperance; and if they could only seem righteously fair without, feared not within to be full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Finally, their monuments in honour of slain prophets and past worthies were rather a testimony to their own relationship, not to the righteous, but to those who murdered them. Their fathers killed the witnesses of God who, while living, condemned them; they, the

sons, only built to their memory when there was no longer a present testimony to their conscience, and their sepulchral honours would cast a halo around themselves.

Such is worldly religion and its heads: the great obstructions to divine knowledge, instead of living only to be its channels of communication; narrow, where they should have been large; cold and lukewarm for God, earnest only for self; daring sophists, where divine obligations lay deep, and punctilious pettifoggers in the smallest details, straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel; anxious only for the outside, reckless as to all that lay concealed underneath. The honour they paid those who had suffered in times past was the proof that they succeeded not them but their enemies, the true legitimate successors of those that slew the friends of God. The successors of those that of old suffered for God are those who suffer now; the heirs of their persecutors may build them sepulchres, erect statues, cast monumental brasses, pay them any conceivable honour. When there is no longer the testimony of God that pierces the obdurate heart, when they who render it are no longer there, the names of these departed saints or prophets become a means of gaining religious reputation for themselves. Present application of the truth is lacking, the sword of the Spirit is no longer in the hands of those who wielded it so well To honour those who have passed away is the cheapest means, on the contrary, for acquiring credit for the men of this generation. It is to swell the great capital of tradition out of those that once served God, but are now gone, whose testimony, is no longer a sting to the guilty. Thus it is evident, that as their honour begins in death, so it

bears the sure stamp of death upon it. Did they plume themselves on the progress of the age? Did they think and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets? How little they knew their own hearts! Their trial was at hand. Their real character would soon appear, hypocrites though they were, and a serpent brood: how could they escape the judgment of hell?

"Wherefore, behold," says He, after thus exposing and denouncing them, "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." It is most eminently a Jewish character and circumstance of persecution; as the aim was the retributive one, "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." Yet, just as the blessed Lord, after pronouncing woes on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, that had rejected His words and works, turned at once to the infinite resources of grace, and from the depth of His own glory brought in the secret of better things to the poor and needy; so it was that even at this time, just before He gave utterance to these woes (so solemn and fatal to the proud religious guides of Israel), He had, as we know from Luke 19, wept over the guilty city, out of which, as His servants, so their Lord could not perish. Here, again, how truly was His heart towards them! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 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." It is not "I have," but your house is left unto you desolate; "for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth [what bitterness of destitution theirs — Messiah, Jehovah Himself, rejecting those who rejected Him!] till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus we have had our Lord presenting Himself as Jehovah the King; we have had the various classes putting themselves forward to judge Him, but, in fact, judged themselves by Him, There remains another scene of great interest, linking itself on to His farewell to the nation just noticed. It is His last communication to the disciples in view of the future; and this Matthew gives in a very full and rich manner. It would be vain to attempt an exposition of this prophetic discourse within my assigned limits. I will, therefore, but skim its surface now, just enough to indicate its outlines, and specially its distinctive features. It is evident that the greater completeness here exhibited beyond what appears in any other gospel is according to special design. In the gospel given by the other apostle, John, there is not a word of it. Mark gives his report very particularly in connection with the testimony of God, as I hope to show when we come to that point. In Luke there is peculiar distinctness in noticing the Gentiles, and their times of supremacy during the long period of Israel's degradation. Again, it is only in Matthew that we find direct allusion to the question of the end of the age. The reason is evident. That consummation is the grand crisis for the Jew. Matthew, writing under the Holy Ghost's direction for Israel, in view both of the consequences of

their past unfaithfulness and of that future crisis, furnishes alike the momentous question and the Lord's special answer to it. This, too, is the reason why Matthew opens out what we do not find in either Mark or Luke, at least in this connection. We have here very comprehensively the Christian part, as it appears to me (i.e., what belongs to the disciples, viewed as professing Christ's name when Israel rejected Him). This suits Matthew's view of the prophecy; and the reason is plain. Matthew shows us not only the consequences of the rejection of the Messiah to Israel, but the change of dispensation, or what would follow on their fatal opposition to One who was their King, yea, not only Messiah, but Jehovah. The consequences were to be, could not but be, all-important; and the Spirit here records this portion of the Lord's prophecy most appropriately to His purpose by Matthew. Would not God turn the Jewish rejection of that glorious Person to some wondrous and suitable account? Accordingly this is what we find here. The order, though different from that which obtains elsewhere, is regulated by perfect wisdom. First of all, the Jews are taken up, or the disciples as representing them, where they then were. They had not got beyond their old thoughts of the temple, those buildings that had excited their admiration and awe. The Lord announces the judgment that was at hand. Indeed, it was involved in the words said before — "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." It was their house. The Spirit was fled. It was no better than a dead body now. Why should it not be carried out speedily to burial? "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." All would soon be over for the present. "And as He sat

upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In answer the Lord sets before them a general history — so general, indeed, that one might hardly gather at first whether He did not contemplate even here Christians as well as Jews. (vv. 4-14.) They are viewed really as a believing but Jewish remnant, which accounts for the breadth of the language. Then, from verse 15, come the details of Daniel's special last half week, whose prophecy is emphatically appealed to. The establishment of the abomination of desolation in the holy place would be the sign for the instant flight of godly ones, like the disciples, who will then be found in Jerusalem. For this is to be followed by great tribulation, exceeding any time of trouble since the beginning of the world up to that day. Nor will there be outward affliction only, but unparalleled deceits, false Christs and false prophets showing great signs and wonders. But the elect are here warned graciously of the Saviour, and far, far beyond any guards afforded in the prophecies of the Old Testament.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall, the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man 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." Matt. 24:29. The appearing of the Son of man is a grand point in Matthew, and indeed in all the gospels. The once rejected Christ will come in glory as the glorious Heir of all things. His advent in the

clouds of heaven will be to take the throne, not of Israel only, but of all people, nations, and languages. Returning thus, to the horror and shame of His adversaries, in or out of the land, the first thing spoken of here is His mission of His angels to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. There is no hint of resurrection or of rapture to heaven here. The elect of Israel are in question, and His own glory as Son of man, without a word of His being Head; nor of the Church His body. What we find here is a process of gathering the chosen, not merely of the Jews, but of all Isaiah, as I suppose, from the four winds of heaven. This interpretation derives support, then, if that be needed, from the parable that immediately follows (verses 32, 33). It is the fig tree once more, but used for a far different purpose. Be it curse in one connection, be it blessing in another, the fig tree typifies Israel.

Then comes, not what may be called the natural, but the scriptural, parable. As that alluded to the outside realm of nature, so this was taken from the Old Testament. The reference here is to the days of Noah, applied to illustrate the coming of the Son of man. So should the blow fall suddenly on all its objects. "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." They must not imagine that it would be like an ordinary judgment in providence, which sweeps here, not there, and sweeps here indiscriminately. In such the guiltless suffer with the guilty, without any approach to an adequate personal distinction. But it will not be so in the days of the Son of man, when He returns to deal with mankind at the end of the age. To be without or within will be no protection.

Of two men in the field; of two women grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left. The discrimination is precise and perfect to the last degree. "Watch therefore," says the Lord, in conclusion of it all; "for ye know not 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."

This transition, in my judgment, leads from the part particularly devoted to the destinies of the Jewish people, and opens into that which concerns the Christian profession. The first of these general pictures of Christendom, which drop all reference to Jerusalem, the temple, the people, or their hope, is found in verses 45-51. Next follows the parable of the ten virgins; then, last of these, is that of the talents. Let me observe, however, that there is a clause in Matt. 25:13 which has a little falsified the application. But the truth is, as is well known, that men, in copying the Greek New Testament, added the words, "Wherein the Son of man cometh," to this verse, which is complete without them. The Spirit really wrote, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." To those versed in the text as it stands in the best copies, this is a fact too familiar to demand many words said about it. No critic of weight considers that these words have any just claim to be in the text that is founded on ancient authority. Others may defend the clause who accept what is commonly received, and what can only be defended by modern or uncertain manuscripts. Surely those I now address are the last men who ought to contend for a mere traditional

or vulgar basis in anything which pertains to God. If we accept the traditional text of the printers, we are on this ground; if, on the contrary, we reject human meddling as a principle, assuredly we ought not to accredit such clauses as this, which we have the strongest grounds to pronounce a mere interpolation, and not truly the word of God. But this being so, we may proceed to notice how strikingly beautiful is the effect of omitting these words.

First, then, in the Christian part, came the parable of the household servant. He who, faithful and wise, met the wishes of his Lord that set him over His household to give them meat in due season, being found so doing, when He comes, is made ruler over all His goods. The evil servant, on the contrary, who settled in his heart that his Lord was not coming, and so yielded to overbearing violence and evil commerce with the profane world, shall be surprised by judgment, and have his portion with the hypocrites in hopeless shame and sorrow.

It is an instructive sketch of Christendom; but there is more. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Thus Christendom entirely breaks down. It is not only the foolish who go to sleep, but the wise. All fail to give a right expression to their waiting for the Bridegroom. "They all slumbered and slept." But God takes care, without telling us how, that there shall be an interruption of their slumber. Instead of remaining out to wait, they must have gone in

somewhere to sleep. In short, the original position is deserted. Not only have they not discharged their duty of awaiting the return of the Bridegroom, but they are no longer in their true posture. When the hope revives, the position is recovered, not before. At midnight, when all were asleep, there was a cry, "The bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him." This acts on the virgins, wise and foolish. So it is now. Who can deny that foolish people enough speak and write about the Lord's coming? An universal agitation of spirit goes on in all countries and all towns. Spite of opposition, the expectation spreads far and wide. It is in no way confined to the children of God. Those who are in quest of oil, going hither and thither, are disturbed by it as certainly as those who have oil in their vessels are cheered to go out once more while waiting for the, Bridegroom's return. But what a difference! The wise were prepared with oil beforehand; the rest proved their folly in doing without it. Let me particularly call your attention to this, The difference consisted not in expecting the Lord's coining or not, but in the possession or the lack of oil (i.e., the unction from the Holy One). All profess Christ; they are all virgins with their lamps. But the want of oil is fatal. He who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of His. Such are the foolish. They know not what has made the others wise unto salvation, whatever they may profess; and their restless search, after that which they have not, finally severs them even here from the company of those they started with as looking for the Lord.

The notion that they are Christians who lack intelligence in prophecy seems to me not false only, but utterly unworthy of a spiritual mind. Is the possession of Christ

less precious than a correct chart of the future? I cannot conceive a Christian without oil in his vessel. It is clearly to have the Holy Ghost, whom every saint that submits to the righteousness of God in Christ has dwelling within him. As John teaches us, the least members of God's family are said to have that unction — not the fathers and young men — but expressly the babes. Of course, if the youngest in Christ are so privileged, the young men and fathers do not want. Therefore I do assert, with the fullest conviction of its truth, that, as the oil in the parable sets forth, not prophetic intelligence, but the gift of God's Spirit, so every Christian, and no other, has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. These, then, are the wise virgins who make ready for the Bridegroom, and go in with Him to the marriage at His coming. As that hour draws near, the others, on the contrary, are more and more agitated. Not resting on Christ for their souls by faith, they have not the Spirit, and seek the inestimable gift among those who sell it, asking who will show them any good — of whom they may buy this priceless oil. The Lord meanwhile comes, they that were ready go in with Him to the wedding, and the door was shut; the rest of the virgins are excluded. The Lord knew them not.

Let me say in passing, that these virgins are distinguished from those who will be called in the end of the age by broad and deep differences. There is no ground to believe that the sufferers in that crisis will ever become heavy with sleep, as saints have done during the long delay of Christendom. That brief season of unprecedented trial and danger does not admit of it. Next, as little ground is there in Scripture to predicate of these latter-day sufferers the possession of the Holy Ghost, which is the peculiar privilege of the believer

since the rejected Christ took His place as Head in heaven. The Holy Ghost is to be poured out on all flesh for the millennial day, no doubt; but no prophecy declares that the remnant will be so characterized till they see Jesus. And, again, there is the third point of distinction, that these sufferers are nowhere set forth as going out to meet the Bridegroom. They may flee away because of the abomination that makes desolate, but this is a contrast rather than a similar feature.

The third of these parables presents another phase again. During the absence of the Lord, before He appears to take the kingdom of the world, He gives gifts to men — different gifts, and in different measures. This pre-eminently belongs to Christianity and its active testimony in peculiar variety. I am not aware of anything exactly answering to it in its full character in the latter day (which will be distinguished by a brief energetic witness of the kingdom). These gifts of Matt. 25 seem to me the thorough expression of the activity of grace, that goes out and labours for a rejected and absent Lord on high. However, I may not dwell upon minuter points, which would, of course, frustrate the desire to give a comprehensive sketch in a short compass.

The latter scene of the chapter is, to a simple mind, evident enough. "All the nations" or Gentiles are in question: there can be no mistake as to this. The Jew has already come before us, and at the beginning of the Lord's discourse, because the disciples were then Jews. Next, as disciples emerged from Judaism into Christianity, we have in this very distinctly the reason why the Christian parenthesis comes second in order. Then, in the third place, we find "all the nations" who are formally designated as such, and distinguished in

the clearest manner from the two others, both in terms and in the things said of them. They come up and are visibly dealt with as Gentiles at the close, when the Son of man reigns as king over the earth. The question which comes before His throne, and decides their eternal lot, does not consist of the secrets of the heart then laid bare, nor their general life, but of their behaviour to His messengers. How had they treated certain persons that the King calls His brethren? It is an appraisal then, founded on their relation to a brief testimony rendered at the close of the present dispensation (I doubt not, by Jewish brethren of the King, when all the world wonders after the beast, and in general men go back to idols, and fall into Antichrist's hands); a testimony suited to the crisis, after the Christian body has been taken to heaven, and the question of the earth is raised once more. Thus these nations or Gentiles are dealt with according to their behaviour to the messengers of the King, just before and up to the time that the King summons them before the throne of His glory. To own His despised heralds when the time of strong delusion comes, will demand the quickening work of the Spirit; which, indeed, is needful for receiving any and every testimony of God. It is not a question of any general issue that would apply to a course of ages, as to the present preaching of God's grace, or to the ordinary current of men's lives. Nothing of the sort appears to be the ground of the Lord's action with either the sheep or the goats.

Matthew 26. Formal teaching is over now, whether practical or prophetic. The scene above all scenes draws near, on which, however blessed, I cannot say much at this time. The Lord Jesus has been presented to the

people, has preached, has wrought miracles, has instructed disciples, has met all the various classes of His adversaries, has launched into the future up to the end of the age. Now He prepares to suffer, — to suffer in absolute surrender of Himself to the Father. Accordingly, in this scene it is no longer man judging Him in words, but God judging Him in His person on the cross. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. So it is here. He maintains, too, every affection in its fulness. Here, aside from the crowd, the Lord for a season takes whatever of rest might be vouchsafed to His spirit. The active work was done. The cross remained — a few brief hours, but of eternal value and unfathomable import, with which indeed nothing can compare.

At the house of Bethany Jesus is now found. It is one of the few scenes introduced by the Spirit of God into all the gospels save Luke, in contrast with, yet in preparation for, the cross. Was the Spirit of God then acting mightily in the heart of one who loved the Saviour? At this very time Satan was pushing on the heart of man to dare the worst against Jesus. Around these were the parties. What a moment for heaven, and earth, and hell! How much, how little was man seen! for if one feature be prominent in His foes more than another, it is this, that man is powerless, even when Jesus was the victim, exposed to every hostile breath as it might appear. Yet does He accomplish everything, when He was but a sufferer; they nothing, when free to do all (for it was their hour, and the power of darkness) nothing but their iniquity; but even in their iniquity doing the will of God, spite of themselves, and contrary to their own plans. They did their will in point of guilt, but it was never accomplished as they desired. First of

all, as we are told, their great anxiety was, that the deed on which their heart was set, the death of Jesus, should not be at the passover. But their resolution was vain. From the beginning God had decided that then, and at no other time, it should be. They assembled, they consulted, "that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him." The upshot of their deliberations was only — "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Little did they foresee the treachery of a disciple, or the public sentence of a Roman governor. Again, there was no uproar among the people, contrary to their fears. Yet did Jesus die on that day according to God's word.

But let us turn aside to the company of our Lord for a little while at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. There was poured out the worship of a heart that loved Him, if ever there was one. She waited not for the promise of the Father; but He who was soon after given to overflowing, even then wrought in the instincts of her new nature. "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat." This, John lets us know, she had kept; it was no new thing got up for the occasion; it was her best, and spent on Jesus. How little it was in her eyes, how precious in His, spent on one whom she loved, for whom she felt the impending danger; for love is quick to feel, and feels more truly than man's most sharpened prudence. So it was, then, that this woman pours her ointment on His head. John mentions His feet. Certainly it was poured upon both. But as Matthew has the King before him, and it was usual to pour on, not the feet of a king, but his head, he naturally records that part of the action which was

suitable to the Messiah. John, on the contrary, whose point is that Jesus was infinitely more than a king, while lowly enough in love for anything — John most appropriately tells us that Mary poured it on His feet. It is interesting, too, to observe, that love, and a profound sense of the glory of Jesus, led her to do that which a sinner's heart, thoroughly broken down in the presence of His grace, prompted her to do. For Luke mentions another person. In this case it was "a woman in the city, who was a sinner," a totally different person, at another and earlier time, and in the house of another Simon, a Pharisee. She too anointed the feet of Jesus with an alabaster box of ointment; but she stood at His feet behind, weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet. There are thus many added circumstances in harmony with the case. All I would point out now is, the kindred feeling to which is led a poor sinner that tasted His grace in presence of her proved unworthiness, and a loving worshipper, filled with the glory of His person, and sensitive to the malice of His foes. However that may be, the Lord vindicates her in the face of murmuring disaffected disciples. It is a solemn lesson; for it shows how one corrupt mind may defile others, incomparably better than its own. The whole college of the apostles, the twelve, were tainted for the moment by the poison insinuated by one. What hearts are ours at such a season, in the face of such love! But so it was, alas! — is. One evil eye may too soon communicate its foul impression, and thereby many be defiled. It was Judas at bottom; but there was also that in the rest which made them susceptible of similar selfishness at the expense of Jesus, although there was not in them the same allowance of diabolical influence which had

suggested thoughts to Judas. The example is surely not without serious admonition to ourselves. How often care for doctrine cloaks Satan, as here care for the poor! Morally, too, this connects itself with Christ's sufferings that should follow. The devotedness of the woman is used of Satan to push Judas into his last wickedness, so much the more determined by the outflow of what his heart could not in the smallest degree appreciate. Thence he goes to sell Jesus. If he could not manage to get the box of precious ointment, or its worth, he would, while he could, secure his little profit on the sale of Jesus to His enemies. "What will ye give me," says he to the chief priests, "and I will deliver him unto you?" Accordingly the covenant takes place — a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell. "They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" — man's, Israel's, worthy price for Jesus!

But now, as the woman had her token for Jesus, and in it her own memorial, wherever, whenever the gospel of the kingdom is preached in the whole world, so Jesus next institutes the standing, undying token of His dying love. He founds the new feast, His own supper for His disciples. At the paschal feast He takes up the bread and the wine, and consecrates them to be on earth the continual remembrance of Himself in the midst of His own. In the language of its institution there are some distinctive features which may claim a notice when we have the opportunity of looking at the other gospels. From this table our Lord goes to Gethsemane, and His agony there. Whatever there was of sorrow, whatever there was of pain, whatever there was of suffering, our Lord never bowed to any suffering from men without, before He bore it on His heart alone with His Father. He

went through it in spirit before He went through it in fact. And this, I believe, is the main point here. I say not all that we have; for here He met the terrors of death — and what a death! — pressed on Him by the prince of this world, who nevertheless found nothing in Him. Thus at the actual hour it was God glorified in Him, the Son of man, even as, when raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, He forthwith declares to His brethren the name of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God, both nature and relationship. Here His cry still is simply to His Father, as in the cross it was, My God, though not this only. However profoundly instructive all this maybe, our Lord in the garden calls upon the disciples to watch and pray; but this is precisely what they find hardest. They slept, and prayed not. What a contrast, too, with Jesus afterwards, when the trial came! And yet for them it was but the merest reflection of that which He passed through. For the world, death is either borne with the obduracy that dares all because it believes nothing, or it is a pang as the end of present enjoyment, the sombre portal of they know not what beyond. To the believer, to the Jewish disciple, before redemption, death was even worse in a sense; for there was a juster perception of God, and of man's state morally. Now all is changed through His death, which the disciples so little estimated, the bare shadow of which, however, was enough to overwhelm them all, and silence every confession of their faith. For him who most of all presumed on the strength of his love, it was enough to prove how little he yet knew of the reality of death, spite of his too ready boasts. And yet what would death have been in his case compared with that of Jesus! But even that was incomparably too much for the strength of Peter; all was proved

powerless, save the One who showed, even when He was weakest, that He was alone the Giver of all strength, the Manifester of all grace, even when He was crushed under such judgment as man never knew before, nor can know again.

Matthew 27. We next see our Lord, not with the disciples, failing, false, or traitorous, but His hour come, in the power of the hostile world, priests, governors, soldiers, and people. What was attempted by man completely broke down. They had their witnesses, but the witnesses agreed not. Failure everywhere is found, even in wickedness — failure not in men's will, but in its accomplishment. God alone governs. So now Jesus was condemned, not for their testimony, but for His own. How wondrous, that even to put Him to death they needed the witness of Jesus; they could not condemn Him to die but for His good confession. For His testimony to the truth they consummated their worst deed; and this doubly, before the high priest as well as before the governor. Warned of his wife (for the Lord took care that there should be providential testimony), as well as too keen-sighted to overlook the malice of the Jews and the innocence of the accused, Pontius Pilate acknowledges his prisoner to be guiltless, yet allowed himself to be forced to act contrary to his own conscience, and according to their wishes whom he wholly despised. Once more, ere Jesus is led out to be crucified, the Jews showed what they were morally; for when the coarse-minded heathen put before them the alternative of releasing Jesus or Barabbas, their instant preference (not without priestly instigation) was a wretch, a robber, a murderer. Such was the feeling of the Jews, God's people, toward their King, because He

was the Son of God, Jehovah, and not a mere man. With bitter irony, but not without God, wrote Pilate the accusation, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." But this was not the only testimony which God gave. For from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And then when Jesus, crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost, that ensued which particularly would strike the heart of the Jew. The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. What could be conceived more solemn to Israel? His death was the death blow to the Jewish system, struck by one who was unmistakably the Maker of heaven and earth. But it was not the dissolution of that system only, but of the power of death itself; for the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, the witness of the value of His death, though not declared till after His resurrection. The death of Jesus, I hesitate not to say, is the sole groundwork of righteous deliverance from sin. In the resurrection is seen the mighty power of God; but what is power for a sinner, with God before his soul, compared with righteousness? What with grace? And this is precisely what we have here. Hence, it is the death of Jesus alone that is the true centre and pivot of all God's counsels and ways, whether in righteousness or in grace. The resurrection, no doubt, is the power that manifests and proclaims all; but what it proclaims is the power of His death, because that alone has vindicated God morally. The death of Jesus alone has proved that nothing could overcome His love — rejection, death itself, so far from this, being only the occasion of displaying love to the uttermost. Therefore it is that, of all things even in Jesus, there is none that

affords such a common and perfect resting-place for God and man as the death of Jesus. When it is a question of power, liberty, life, no doubt we must turn to the resurrection; and hence it is, that in the Acts of the apostles this necessarily comes out most prominently, because the matter in hand was to afford proof, on the one hand, of manifested but despised grace; on the other hand, of God's reversing man's attainder of Jesus by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him to His own right hand on high. The death of Jesus would be no demonstration of this sort. On the contrary, His death was what man appeared to triumph in. They had got rid of Jesus thus, but the resurrection proved how vain and short-lived it was, and that God was against them. The object was to make evident that man was wholly opposed to God, and that God even now manifested His sentence on it. The raising up Him whom man slew renders this unquestionable. I admit that in the resurrection of Christ God is for us, for the believer. But the sinner and the believer must not be confounded together, for there is an immense difference between the two things. Whatever the witness of perfect love in the gift and death of Jesus, for the sinner there is not, there cannot be, anything whatever in the resurrection of Jesus save condemnation. I press this the more strongly, because the recovery of the precious truth of Christ's resurrection exposes some, by a kind of reaction, to weaken the value which His death has in God's mind, and ought to have in our faith. Let those, then, who prize the resurrection, see to it that they be exceedingly jealous for the due place of the cross.

The two things we find remarkably guarded here. It was not the resurrection, but the death of Jesus, that rent

the veil of the temple; it was not His resurrection that opened the graves, but His cross, though the saints rose not till after He rose. It is just so with us practically. In point of fact, we never do know the full worth of the death of Christ, until we look upon it from the power and results of the resurrection. But what we contemplate from the side of resurrection is not itself, but the death of Jesus. Hence it is that in the Church's assembling, and most properly, on the Lord's day, we do in the breaking of bread show forth, not the resurrection, but the death of the Lord. At the same time, we show forth His death not on the day of death, but upon that of resurrection. Do I forget that it is the day of resurrection? Then I little understand my liberty and joy. If, on the contrary, the resurrection day brings no more before me than the resurrection, it is too plain that the death of Christ has lost its infinite grace for my soul.

The Egyptians would have liked to cross the Red Sea, but they had no care for the doors sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. They essayed to pass through the watery walls, desiring thus to follow Israel to the other side. But we do not read that they ever sought the shelter of the Paschal Lamb's blood. No doubt, this is an extreme case, and the judgment of the world of nature; but we may learn even from an enemy not to value resurrection less, but to value the death and blood-shedding of our precious Saviour more. There is really nothing towards God and man like the death of Christ.

Then, in contrast with the poor but devoted women of Galilee that surrounded the cross, we behold the fears, the just fears, of those who had accomplished the death of Jesus. These guilty men go full of anxiety to Pilate. They feared "that deceiver," and so had their watch, and

stone, and seal — in vain! The Lord that sat in the heavens had them in derision. Jesus had prepared His own (and His enemies knew it) for His rising on the third day. Women came there the evening before to look at the place where the Lord lay buried. (Matt. 28) That morning, very early, when there were none there but the guards, the angel of the Lord. descends. We are not told that our Lord rose at that time; still less is it said that the angel of the Lord rolled away the stone for Him. He that passed through the doors, closed for fear of the Jews, could just as easily pass through the sealed stone, despite all the soldiers of the empire. We know that there the angel sat after rolling away the great stone which had closed the sepulchre, where our Lord, despised and rejected of men, nevertheless accomplished Isaiah's prophecy. In making His grave with the rich. The Lord then had this further witness, that the very keepers, hardened and bold as such usually are, trembled, and became as dead men, while the angel bids the women not to fear; for this Jesus which was crucified "is not here: He is risen. Come, and see the place where the Lord lay, and go and tell the disciples, Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee." This is a point of importance for completing the view of His rejection, or its consequences in resurrection, and so Matthew takes particular care of it, though the same fact may be recorded also by Mark for his purpose.

But Matthew does not speak of the various appearances of the Lord in Jerusalem after the resurrection. What he does dwell upon particularly, and of course with his special reasons for it, is, that the Lord, after His resurrection, adheres to the place where the state of the Jews led Him to be habitually, and shed His light around

according to prophecy; for the Lord resumed relations once more in Galilee with the remnant represented by" the disciples after He rose from the dead. It was in the place of Jewish contempt; it was where the benighted poor of the flock were, the neglected of the proud scribes and rulers of Jerusalem. There the risen Lord was pleased to go before His servants and rejoin them.

But as the Galilean women went with this word from the angel, the Lord Himself met them. "And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." It is remarkable that in our gospel this was permitted. To Mary Magdalene, who in her desire to pay her wonted obeisance probably was attempting something similar, He altogether declines it; but this is mentioned in the gospel of John. How is it, then, that the two apostolic accounts show us the homage of the women received, and of Mary Magdalene refused, on the same day, and perhaps at the same hour? Clearly the action is significant in both. The reason, I apprehend, was this, Matthew sets before us that while He was the rejected Messiah, though now risen, He not only reverted to His relations in the despised part of the land with His disciples, but gives, in this accepted worship of the daughters of Galilee, the pledge of His special association with the Jews in the latter day; for it is precisely thus that they will look for the Lord. That is, a Jew, as such, counts upon the bodily presence of the Lord. The point in John's record is the very reverse; for it is the taking one, who was a sample of believing Jews, out of Jewish relations into association with Himself just about to ascend to heaven. In Matthew He is touched. They held Him by the feet without remonstrance, and thus worshipped Him in bodily presence. In John He

says, "Touch me not;" and the reason is, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Worship henceforth was to be offered to Him above, invisible, but known there by faith. To the women in Matthew it was here that He was presented for their worship; to the woman in John it was there only He was to be known now. It was not a question of bodily presence, but of the Lord ascended to heaven and there announcing the new relationships for us with His Father and God. Thus, in the one case, it is the sanction of Jewish hopes of His presence here, below for the homage of Israel; in the other gospel, it is His personal absence and ascension, leading souls to a higher and suited association with Himself, as well as with God, taking even those who were Jews out of their old condition to know the Lord no more after the flesh.

Most consistently, therefore, in this gospel, we have no ascension scene at all. If we had only the gospel of Matthew, we should possess no record of this wonderful fact: so striking is the omission, that a well-known commentary, Mr. Alford's first edition, broached the rash and irreverent hypothesis founded upon it, that our Matthew is an incomplete Greek version of the Hebrew original, because there was no such record; for it was impossible, in the opinion of that writer, that an apostle could have omitted a description of that event. The fact is, if you add the ascension to Matthew, you would overload and mar his gospel. The beautiful end of Matthew is, that (while chief priests and elders essay to cover their wickedness by falsehood and bribery, and their lie "is commonly reported among the Jews until this day,") our Lord meets His disciples on a mountain in

Galilee, according to His appointment, and sends them to disciple all the Gentiles. How great is the change of dispensation is manifest from His former commission to the same men in Matt. 10. Now they were to baptize them unto the name of the Father, etc. It was not a question of the Almighty God of the fathers, or the Jehovah God of Israel. The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is characteristic of Christianity. Permit me to say, that this is the true formula of Christian baptism, and that the omission of this form of sound words appears to me quite as fatal to the validity of baptism as any change that can be pointed out in other respects. Instead of being a Jewish thing, this is what supplanted it. Instead of a relic of older dispensations to be modified or rather set aside now, on the contrary, it is the full revelation of the name of God as now made known, not before. This only came out after the death and resurrection of Christ. There is no longer the mere Jewish enclosure He had entered during the days of His flesh, but the change of dispensation was now dawning: so consistently does the Spirit of God hold to His design from the first to the very end.

Accordingly He closes with these words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [age]." How the form of the truth would have been weakened, if not destroyed, had we then heard of His going up to heaven! It is evident that the moral force of it is infinitely more preserved as it is. He is charging His disciples, sending them on their world-wide mission with these words, "Lo, I am with you always, all the days," etc. The force is immensely increased, and for this very reason that we hear and see no more. He promised His presence with

them to the end of the age; and thereon the curtain drops. He is thus heard, if not seen, for ever with His own on earth, as they go forth upon that errand so precious, but perilous. May we gather real profit from all He has given us.

1 *The most ancient text, represented by the Vatican, Sinai, Beza's Cambridge, L. of Paris (C. being defective, as well as the Alexandrian), and the Rescript of Dublin, omits verse 14, which may have been foisted in from Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47. This leaves the complete series of seven woes.

Mark

Mark 1 - 8.

It is remarkable how tradition has contrived to injure the truth in touching the question of the method of the gospel we now enter on; for the current view which comes down to us from the ancients, stamped too with the name of one who lived not long after the apostles, lays down — that Mark's is that gospel which arranges the facts of our Lord's life, not in, but out of the order of their occurrence. Now, that order is precisely what he most observes. And this mistake, if it be one, which notoriously had wrought from the earliest days, and naturally, therefore, to a large extent since, of course vitiated the right understanding of the book. I am persuaded that the Spirit of God intended that we should have among the gospels one that adheres to the simple order of the facts in giving our Lord's history. Otherwise, we must be plunged in uncertainty, not merely as to one particular gospel, but as lacking the means of rightly judging departures from historic order in all the others; for it is plain, that if there be no such thing as a regular order in any one gospel, we are necessarily deprived of all power of determining in any case when the events did really occur which stand differently connected in the rest of the gospels. It is not in any way that one would seek what is commonly called a "harmony," which is really to obscure the perception of the special objects of the gospels. At the same time, nothing can be more certain than that the real author of the gospels, even God Himself, knew all perfectly. Nor, even to take the lowest ground, on the part of the

different writers, is ignorance of the order in which the facts occurred a reasonable key to the peculiarities of the gospels. The Holy Ghost deliberately displaced many events and discourses, but this could not be through carelessness, still less through caprice, but only for ends worthy of God. The most obvious order would be to give them just as they occurred. Partly, then, as it seems to me, that we might be able to judge with accuracy and with certainty of the departures from the order of occurrence, the Spirit of God has given us in one of these gospels that order as the rule. In which of them is it found, do you ask? I have no doubt that the answer is, spite of tradition, In the gospel of Mark. And the fact exactly agrees with the spiritual character of his gospel, because this also ought to have great weight in confirming the answer, if not in deciding the question.

Any person who looks at, Mark, not merely piecemeal, though it is evident in any part, but, much more satisfactorily, as a whole, will rise from the consideration of the gospel with the fullest conviction that what the Holy Ghost has undertaken to give us in this history of Christ is His ministry. It is now so much a matter of common knowledge, that there is no need to dwell long upon a fact that is generally confessed. I shall endeavour to show how the whole account hangs together, and bears out this well-known and most simple truth — how it accounts for the peculiarities in Mark, for what is given us, and for what is left out; and of course, therefore, for his differences from the others. All this, I think, will be made clear and certain to any who may not have thoroughly examined it before. Here I would only observe, how entirely this goes along with the fact that Mark adheres to the order of history, because, if he is

giving us the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and particularly His service in the word, as well as in the miraculous signs which illustrated that service, and which were its external vouchers, it is plain that the order in which the facts occurred is precisely that which is the most calculated of all to give us a true and adequate view of His ministry; whereas it is not so, if we look at the object of either Matthew or Luke.

In the former the Holy Ghost is showing us the rejection of Jesus, and that rejection proved from the very first. Now, in order to give us the right understanding of His rejection, the Holy Ghost groups facts together, and groups them often, as we have had occasion to notice, entirely regardless of the time at which they occurred. What was wanted was a bright vivid view of the shameless rejection of the Messiah by His own people. It was needed, thereupon, to make plain what God would undertake in consequence of that rejection, that is to say, the vast economic change that would follow. It was necessarily the weightiest thing that had ever been or that could be in this world, the rejection of a divine Person who was at the same time “the great King,” the promised expected Messiah of Israel. For that very reason, the mere order of the facts would be entirely insufficient to give proper weight to the object of the Holy Ghost in Matthew. Therefore the Spirit of God does what even man has wit enough to do, where he has any analogous object before him. There is a bringing together, from different places, persons, and times in the history, the great salient facts which make evident the total rejection of the Messiah, and the glorious change which God was able to introduce for the Gentiles in consequence of that rejection. Such is the object in

Matthew; and accordingly this accounts for the departure from mere sequence of events.

In Luke, again, there is another reason that we shall find, when we come to details, abundantly confirmed. For therein the Holy Ghost undertakes to show us Christ as the One who brought to light all the moral springs of the heart of man, and at the same time the perfect grace of God in dealing with man as he is; therein, too, the divine wisdom in Christ which made its way through this world, the lovely grace, too, which attracted man when utterly confounded and broken down enough to cast himself upon what God is. Hence, throughout the gospel of Luke, we have, in some respects, a disregard of the mere order of time equal to that which characterized Matthew. If we suppose two facts, mutually illustrating each other, but occurring at totally different times, in such a case these two facts might be brought together. For instance, supposing the Spirit of God desired in our Lord's history to show the value of the word of God and of prayer, He might clearly bring together two remarkable occasions, in one of which our Lord revealed the mind of God about prayer — in the other, His judgment of the value of the word. The question whether the two events took place at the same time is here entirely immaterial. No matter when they occurred, they are here seen together; if put out of their occurrence, in fact, it is to form the justest order for illustrating the truth that the Holy Ghost meant us to receive.

This general observation is made here, because I think it is particularly in place in introducing the gospel of Mark.

But God has taken care to meet another point by the way. Man might take advantage of this departure from the historical order in some gospels, and the maintenance of it in others, in order to decry the writers or their writings. Of course, he is hasty enough to impute “discrepancy.” There is no real ground for the charge. God has taken a very wise method to contradict and rebuke the credulous incredulity of man. As there are four evangelists, so He has arranged it that, of these four, two should adhere to historical order, and two should forsake it where it Was required. Further, of these two, one was, and one was not an apostle in each case. Of the two evangelists, Mark and John, who generally maintain historical order, the most remarkable thread of events was not given by an apostle. Nevertheless, John, who was an apostle, adheres to the historical order in the fragmentary series of facts, here and there, in the life of Christ, that he gives us. At the same time that the gospel of John does not undertake to present a sketch of the entire course of Christ, Mark describes the whole career of His ministry with more particularity than any other. Hence it is that John practically acts as a kind of supplement, not to Mark only, but to all the evangelists; and we have, ever and anon, a cluster of the richest events, yet keeping to historical order. Not to speak of its wondrous preface, there is an introduction that precedes the account given in the other gospels, filling up a certain space after His baptism, but before His public ministry. And then, again, we have a number of discourses which our Lord gave more particularly to His disciples after His public relations were over. These are all given, as it appears to me, in the exact order of their delivery, without any departure from it, save only that we find a parenthesis

once or twice in John, which, if not seen there to be a parenthesis, wears an appearance of a departure from the succession of time; but of course a parenthesis does not come under the ordinary structure of a regular sentence or series of things.

This explanation, I trust, will help to a general understanding of the relative place of the gospels. We have Matthew and Luke, one of them an apostle, and the other not, both of whom are wont to depart from historical order very largely. We have Mark and John, one of them an apostle, and the other not, both of whom likewise, as a rule, adhere to historical order. God has thus cut off all just reason on men's part for saying that it is a question of knowing or not knowing the facts as they occurred, some being eyewitnesses, and others learning the events, etc., otherwise. Of those that keep the order of history, one was, the other was not, an eye-witness; to those that adopt a different arrangement precisely the same remark applies. Thus it is that God has confuted all attempts of His enemies to cast the smallest discredit upon the instruments He has used. It is thus made apparent that (so far from the structure of the gospels being attributable in any way to ignorance on one side, or, on the other, to a competent knowledge of the facts), on the contrary, he was no eye-witness who has given us the fullest, minutest, most vivid, and graphic sketch of the Lord's service here below; and this in small particulars, which, as every one knows, is always the great test of truth. Persons who do not commonly speak the truth can nevertheless be careful enough sometimes about great matters; but it is in little words and ways where the heart betrays its own treachery, or the eye its lack of observation. And it is

precisely in this that Mark triumphs so completely — rather, let me say, the Spirit of God in His employment of Mark. Nor was it that Mark had earlier been a worthy servant himself. Far from it. Who does not know that, when he began his work, he was not always fervent in serving the Lord? We are told in the Acts of the Apostles that he deserted the great apostle of the Gentiles when he accompanied him and his cousin Barnabas; for such was the relationship, rather than that of uncle. He left them, returning home to his mother and Jerusalem. His associations were with nature and the great seat of religious tradition, which for a while, of course, ruined him, as it tends to ruin every servant of God who is similarly ensnared. Nevertheless, God's grace overcomes all difficulties. So it was in the personal ministry of Mark, as we gather from the glorious work Mark was afterwards given to do, both in other ministry (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11), and in the extraordinary honour of writing one of the inspired accounts of his Master. Mark had not possessed the advantage of that personal acquaintance with the facts which some of the other writers had enjoyed; yet is he the one through whom the Holy Ghost condescended to impart the minutest, and at the same time the most suggestive touches, if I may so say, that are found in any view vouchsafed us of the actual living ministry of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, such was the current of his own history, as forming him for the work he subsequently had to do; for while at first there was certainly that which looked uncommonly like a false start, afterwards, on the contrary, he is acknowledged by Paul most cordially, spite of early disappointment and rebuke; for his company had been absolutely refused, even at the cost of losing Barnabas, to whom the apostle had special grounds of personal

attachment. Barnabas was the man who had first gone after Saul of Tarsus; for assuredly he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and thus the more willing to accredit the great grace of God in Saul of Tarsus, when the new convert was regarded with suspicion, and might have been left alone for a season. Thus Saul had known literally in his own history how little the grace of God commands confidence in a sinful world. After all this, then, it was that Mark, who had fallen under the censure of Paul, and had been the occasion of separating Barnabas from that apostle — that very Mark afterwards completely retrieved his lost character, and the apostle Paul takes more pains by far to reinstate him in the confidence of the saints, than he had done personally to refuse association with him in the service of the Lord.

Who, then, so fit to give us the Lord Jesus as the true servant? Choose whom you like. Go over the whole range of the New Testament; find out one whose own personal career so adapted him to delight in, and to become the suited vessel for the Holy Ghost to show us, the perfect Servant of God. It was the man that had been the faulty servant; it was the man whom grace had restored and made to be a faithful servant, — who had proved how ensnaring is the flesh, and how dangerous the associations of human tradition and of home; but who thus, unprofitable at first for the ministry, became afterwards so profitable, as Paul himself took care to declare publicly and for ever in the imperishable word of God. This was the instrument whom God employed by the Holy Ghost to give us the grand lineaments of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, as Levi the publican, the apostle Matthew was providentially formed for his task; and grace, condescending to look at all

circumstances, uever deigns to be controlled by them, but always, while working in them, nevertheless retains its own supremacy above them. Even so in Mark's case there was just as great an appropriateness for the task God had assigned him, as there was in the call of the earlier evangelist from the receipt of custom, and the choice of one so despised of Israel to show the fatal course of that nation, when the Lord turned at the great epoch of dispensational change to call in Gentiles and the despised of Israel themselves. But if there was this manifest fitness in Matthew for his work, it would be strange if there were not as much in Mark for his. And this is what we find in his gospel. There is no parade of circumstance; there is no pomp of introduction even for the Lord Jesus Christ in this gospel, not even that style which is most rightly found elsewhere. It could not be that the Messiah of Israel was to enter among His chosen people, and be found in Israel's land, without due witness and clear tokens preceding His approach; and the God who had given promises, and who had established the kingdom, would surely make it manifest; for the Jews did require a sign, and God gave them signs in abundance before the coining of the greatest sign of all.

Thus it is that in the gospel of Matthew we have seen the amplest credentials from angels and among men of the Messiah, who then and there was born the King of the Jews, in Immanuel's land. But in Mark all this is with equal beauty absent; and suddenly, without any other preparation than John preaching and baptizing — the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" — at once, after this, the Lord Jesus is found, not born, not the subject of homage, but

preaching, taking up the work which John not long after laid down, as it were, on going to prison. That setting aside of the Baptist (ver. 14) becomes the signal for the public service of the Lord; and, accordingly, the service of Christ is thenceforward pursued throughout our gospel; and first of all His Galilean service, which continues down to the end of chapter 10 I do not purpose tonight to look even at the whole of this Galilean ministry, but to divide the subject matter as my time requires, and therefore I do not now limit myself to the natural divisions of the gospel, but simply follow it according to chapters, as the occasion may require. We shall take it in two portions.

In the opening section or preface (of verses 1-13), then, we have here no genealogy whatever, but very simply the announcement of John the Baptist. We have our Lord then ushered into His public ministry, and, first of all, His Galilean labours. As He walks by the sea, He sees Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea. These He calls to follow Him. It was not the first acquaintance of the Lord Jesus with these two apostles. At first sight it might seem strange that a word, even though it were the word of the Lord, should call these two men away from their father or their occupation; yet no one can call it unprecedented, as the call of Levi, already referred to, makes plain. Nevertheless, so it is that in the case of Andrew and Simon, as well as the sons of Zebedee, called about the same time, there was certainly previous acquaintance with the Saviour. Two disciples of the Baptist, one of them Andrew, preceded his brother Simon, as we know from John 1. But here it is not at all the same time or facts that are described in that gospel. In the call to the work, I have no hesitation

in saying that Andrew and Simon were called before John and James; but in the personal acquaintance with the Saviour, which we find in the gospel of John, it is evident to me, that an.unnamed disciple (as I think, John himself) was before Simon. Both are perfectly true. There is not even the appearance of contradiction when the Scripture is rightly understood. Each of these is exactly in its proper place, for we have in our gospel Christ's ministry. That is not the theme of the gospel of John, but a far deeper and more personal subject; it is the revelation of the Father in the Son to man upon the earth. It is eternal life found by souls, and of course in the Son of God. This accordingly is the first point of contact which the Holy Ghost loves to trace in John's gospel. Why is all that entirely left out of Mark? Evidently because his province is not a soul acquainted for the first time with Jesus, the display of the wonderful truth of eternal life in Him. Another subject is in hand. We have the Saviour's grace, of course, in all the gospels; but the great theme of Mark is His ministry. Hence it is, that not the personal so much as the ministerial call is the one referred to here. In John, on the contrary, where it was the Son made known to man by faith of the Holy Ghost's operation, it is not the ministerial call, but the previous one — the personal call of grace unto the knowledge of the Son, and eternal life in Him.

This may serve to show that weighty lessons lie under that which a careless eye might count a comparatively trivial difference in these gospels. Well we know that in God's word there is nothing trivial; but what might at first sight seem so is pregnant with truth, and also in

immediate relation to God's aim in each particular book where these facts are found.

All things, then, they now forsake at the call of the Lord. It was not a question simply of eternal life. The principle, no doubt, is always true; but we do not in fact find all things thus forsaken in ordinary cases. Eternal life is brought to souls in the Christ who attracts them; but they are enabled to glorify God where they are. Here it is all abandoned in order to follow Christ. The next scene is the synagogue of Capernaum. And there our Lord shows the objects of His mission here in two particulars. First there is teaching — "He taught them," as it is said, "as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." It was not tradition, it was not reason, not imagination, or the persuasible words of man's wisdom. It was the power of God. It was that, therefore, which was equally simple and sure. This necessarily gives authority to the tone of him who, in a world of uncertainty and deceit, utters with assurance the mind of God. It is a dishonour to God and His word to pronounce with hesitation the truth of God, if indeed we know it for our own souls. It is unbelief to say "I think," if I am sure; nay, revealed truth is not only what I know, but what God has made known to me. It is to cloud and weaken the truth, it is to injure souls, it is to lower God Himself, if we do not speak with authority where we have no doubt of His word. But then it is plain that we must be taught of God before we are at liberty to speak thus confidently.

But it is here to be noted, that this is the first quality mentioned in our Lord's teaching. This, I need not say, has a voice to us. Where we cannot speak with authority, we had better not speak at all. It is a simple rule, and

abundantly short. At the same time it is clear that it would lead to great deal of searching of heart; but, I am no less persuaded, it would be with immense profit to ourselves and to our hearers.

The second thing was not authority in teaching, but power in action; and our Lord deals with the root of the mischief in man — the power of Satan, now so little believed in — the power of Satan over human spirits or bodies, or both. There was then in the synagogue — the very place of meeting, where Jesus was — a man with an unclean spirit. The demoniac cried out; for it was impossible that the power of God in the person of Jesus could be there without detecting him that was under the power of Satan. The bruiser of the serpent was there, the deliverer of the enthralled sons of Adam. The mask is thrown off; the man, the unclean spirit, cannot rest in the presence of Jesus. “He cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?” In the most singular way he blends together the action of the evil spirit with his own — “What have we to do with thee? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God.” Jesus rebukes him. The unclean spirit tore him; for it was right that there should be the manifestation of the effects of the evil power, restricted as it was before Him who had defeated the tempter. It was a profitable lesson, that man should know what the working of Satan really is. We have on the one side, then, the malignant effect of Satan’s power, and on the other the blessed benignant might of the Lord Jesus Christ, who compels the spirit to come out, amazing all that saw and heard, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with

authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." There was, we thus see, both the authority of truth, and also the power that wrought in outward signs accompanying.

The next scene proves that it was not merely displayed in such acts as these: there was the misery and the maladies of man apart from the direct possession of the enemy. But virtue goes out of Jesus wherever there was an appeal of need. Peter's wife's mother is the first who is presented after he leaves the synagogue; and the marvellous grace and power blended in His healing of Peter's mother-in-law attracts crowds of sick with every evil; so that we know all the city was come together at the door. "And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

Thus, then, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is fully come. It is thus that he enters upon it in Mark. It is clearly the manifestation of the truth of God with authority. Divine power is vested in man over the devil, as well as over disease. Such was the form of the ministry of Jesus. There was a fulness in it naturally, one need scarce say, which was suitable to Him who was the head of ministry as well as its great pattern here below, no less than, as He is now, its source from His place of glory in heaven. But there is another notable feature in it, too, as contributing to fill this instructive introductory picture of our Lord's ministry in its actual exercise. Our Lord "suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him." He refused a testimony that was not of God. It might be true, but He would not accept the testimony of the enemy.

But positive strength is also requisite in dependence on God. Hence we are told, “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” There, just as there is the rejection of the enemy’s testimony, so there is the fullest leaning upon God’s power. No personal glory, no title to power that attached to Him, was the smallest reason for relaxing in entire subjection to His Father, or for neglecting to seek His guidance day by day. Thus He waited on God after the enemy was vanquished in the wilderness, after He had proved the value of that victory in healing those oppressed of the devil. Thus engaged it is that Simon and others follow and find Him. “And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.”

But this public attraction to the Lord Jesus was a sufficient ground for not returning. He did not seek the applause of man, but that which comes from God. Directly it came to be published, so to speak, the Lord Jesus retires from the scene. If all men sought Him, He must go where it was a question of need, not of honour. Accordingly He says, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there; for therefore came I forth.” He ever abides the perfect, lowly, dependent servant of God here below. No sketch can be more admirable, nowhere else can we see the perfect ideal of ministry completely realized.

Are we, then, to assume that all this was set down at random? How are we to account without a definite purpose for these various particulars and no others swelling the picture of ministry? Very simply. It was what God inspired Mark for. It was the Spirit’s object by him. It is owing to a different design that we find other

topics introduced elsewhere. No other gospel presents even the same facts after such a sort, because no other is thus occupied with the Lord's ministry. Thus the reason is most plain. It is Mark, and he alone, who was led of God to put the facts together that bear upon Christ's ministry, adhering to the simple natural order of the facts related, omitting of course what did not illustrate the point, but among those which did, keeping the events as they followed one another. Christ is thus seen as the perfect servant. He was Himself showing what service of God is at the beginning of His ministry. He was forming others. He had called Peter, and James, and Andrew, and John. He was making them fishers of men-servants, too. And so it is that the Lord presents before their eyes, before their hearts, before their consciences, these perfect ways of grace in His own path here below. He was forming them after His own heart.

Then, at the close of the chapter, the leper comes and, at the beginning of the next chapter, the paralytic man is brought (Mark 2). These we have had in Matthew, and we shall find the same in Luke. But here you will observe that the two cases are closer together. It is not so in Matthew, but in Luke. Matthew, as we saw, gave us the leper at the beginning of Matthew 8, and the paralytic man at the beginning of Matthew 9. Mark, who simply relates facts as they occur, introduced nothing between these two cases. They were, as I conceive, not long apart. The one followed soon after the other. and they are so introduced to us here. In the one, sin is viewed as the great type of defilement; in the other, sin is viewed as guilt accompanied by utter weakness. Man, utterly unfit for the presence of God, needs to be

cleansed from his loathsome impurity. Such is the representation in leprosy. Man, utterly powerless for walk here below, needs to be forgiven as well as strengthened. Such is the great truth set forth in the paralytic case. Here too, with singular fulness, we have the picture of the crowds that were gathered round the door of the house, and the Lord, as usual, preaching to them. We have then a graphic picture of the palsied man brought in, borne by four. All the particulars are brought before our eyes. More than that: as they could not come nigh to Jesus for the press, the roof was uncovered, and the man is let down before the Lord's eyes. Jesus, seeing their faith, addresses the man, meets the unbelieving blasphemous thoughts of the scribes that were there, and brings out His own personal glory as Son of man, rather than as God. This latter was the great point in curing the leper; for it was an axiom that God alone could cure a leper. Such was the acknowledgment of Israel's king at a remarkable point in their history; such would have been the common confession of any Jew "Am I God?" This was the point there. God must act directly or by a prophet, as every Jew would allow, in order to cure leprosy; but, in the case of the palsied man, our Lord asserted another thing altogether, namely, that "the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins." Then He proved His power over the most hopeless bodily weakness as a witness of His authority here below to forgive. It was the Son of man on earth that had power. Thus the one proved God had come down from heaven, and had really, in the person of that blessed Saviour, become a man without ceasing to be God. Such is the truth apparent in the cleansing of the leper; but in the paralytic healed, it is a different side of the Lord's glory. The servant of God and man in every

case, here He was the Son of man that had power on earth to forgive the guilty, and prove its reality by imparted strength to walk before all.

Then follows the call of the publican. “As he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.” Next, the Lord is seen at a feast in the house of him who was thus called by grace, which excites hatred in the slaves of religious routine. “When the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples” — not to Him; they ‘had not honesty enough for that — “How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” It gave the Lord an opportunity to explain the true character and suited objects of His ministry. To sinners, as such, went forth the call of God. It was not the government of a people now, but the invitation of sinners. God had delivered His people once; He had called them His son too, and called His son out of Egypt; but now it was a question of calling sinners, even if the words “to repentance” be given up as an interpolation derived from the corresponding passage in Luke, where its propriety is evident. The Lord gloried in the grace which He was ministering here below.

As the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, this is the next scene, raising the question of the character of those whom Jesus was sent to call. The narrative presents all this in a very orderly manner, but still adhering simply to the facts. Then comes the question of mingling the new principles with the old. This the Lord pronounces quite impossible. He shows

that it was inconsistent to expect fasting when the Bridegroom was there. It would argue an entire unbelief in His glory, a total want of right feeling in those who owned His glory. It was all very well for people who did not believe in Him; but if the disciples recognised Him as the Bridegroom, it were utterly incongruous to fast in His presence.

Hence, our Lord takes the opportunity of pursuing the subject more deeply in the observation that “no man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.” The forms, the outward manifestation of that which Christ was introducing, will not suit, and cannot mingle with the old elements of Judaism, still less will their inner principles consent. This He enters on next: “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.” Christianity demands an outward expression, agreeable to its own intrinsic and distinctive life.1 Mark 3. This theme is followed up by the two sabbaths, the first of these sabbath days bringing clearly out to view that God no longer owned Israel, and this because that Jesus was as much despised in this day as David had been of old. Such is the point referred to here. The disciples of Christ were starving. What a position! No doubt David and his men suffered lack in that day. What was the effect then as to the system which God had sanctioned? God would not maintain His own ordinances in presence of the moral wrong to His anointed, and those that clave unto Him. His own honour was at stake. His ordinances, however important in their place, give way before the

sovereign dispositions of His purpose. The application was evident. The Lord Jesus Christ was a greater than David; and were not the followers of Jesus quite as precious as those of Jesse's son? If the bread of priests became common, when they of old were hungry, would God now hold to His sabbath when the disciples of Jesus lacked ordinary food? Besides, He adds, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath." Thus He asserts the superiority of His own person, and this as the rejected man; and therefore the title, "Son of Man," is especially brought in here.

But, then, there is more which comes out on the second sabbath day. There was the presence of bitter helplessness among men. It was not merely, that the disciples of Jesus were in want, the witness of His own rejection, but in the synagogue He enters next was a man with a withered hand. How came this to pass? What was the feeling that could plead the law of the sabbath to keep from healing a miserable human sufferer? Had Jesus no heart, because their eyes were only open to find in His love an occasion to accuse Him who felt for every sorrow of man upon the earth? He was there with adequate power to banish all sorrow with its source. And therefore it is that our Lord Jesus, in this case, instead of merely pleading the case of the guiltless, goes boldly forward; and in the midst of a full synagogue as He sees them watching that they might accuse Him, He answers the wicked thought of their heart. He gives them the opportunity they desired. "And he said to the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth." There was no concealment for a moment. "He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to

save life, or to kill?" Was He not the perfect servant of God, that knows so well the times? Here, then, instead of merely defending disciples, He challenges their wicked and evil thoughts in open congregation, and bore His witness that God's delight is not in holding to rules, when it would be for the hindrance of the displays of His goodness. Contrariwise, His act declares that no rules can bind God not to do good: His nature is goodness; let man pretend ever such zeal for His own law to keep man wretched and hinder the flow of grace. God's laws were never intended to bar His love. They were intended, no doubt, to put a restriction upon man's evil, never to forbid God from doing His own good will. Alas! they had no faith that God was there.

And it is remarkable, though not noticed at the beginning of Mark 1, that Mark does not enter upon the service of our Lord Jesus before presenting Him in verse 1 as the Son of God, followed by the application of the prophetic oracle, that He was really Jehovah. The only true servant was truly divine. What an illustrious testimony to His glory! At the start this was well, and rightly ordered, and in place most suitable; the more so as it is an unusual thought in Mark. And here let me make the remark in passing, that we have hardly any quotation of Scripture by the evangelist himself I am not aware that any positive case can be adduced, except in these prefatory verses of the gospel; for Mark 15:28 rests on too precarious authority to be fairly regarded as an exception. There are some not infrequent quotations either by our Lord or to our Lord; but the application of Scripture about our Lord by the evangelist himself, so frequent in the gospel of Matthew, is almost, if not entirely, unknown to the gospel of Mark. And the reason,

I think, is very plain. What he had in hand was not the accomplishment of Scriptural marks or hopes, but the fulfilment of the Lord's ministry. What he therefore dwells on was not what others had said of old, but what the Lord Himself did. Hence it is that application of Scripture, and accomplishments of prophecy, naturally disappear where such is the theme of the gospel.

However, again returning to the conclusion of the second sabbath day. Our Lord looks round about on these Sabbatarians with anger, being distressed, as it is said, at the hardness of their hearts. and then bids the man stretch forth his hand, which was no sooner done than 'it was restored. This goodness of God, so publicly and fearlessly witnessed by Him who thus served man, at once goads on to madness the murderous feeling of the religious leaders. It is the first point where, according to Mark's account, the Pharisees, taking counsel with the Herodians, conceived the design of killing Jesus. It was not fit that One so good should live in their midst. The Lord withdraws to the sea with His disciples; and subsequent to this it is that, while He heals many, and casts out unclean spirits, He also goes up into a mountain, where He takes a new step. It is one point of change in Mark's gospel, a step in advance of all He had hitherto done. Following upon the design of the Pharisees with the Herodians to destroy Jesus, the new measure He adopts is the sovereign call and appointment of the twelve, that He might in due time send them forth. Thus, He not merely calls them to be with Him, but He appoints them in a formal manner to the great mission on which they were to be sent out. The Lord now takes the conspiracy of two great enemies in Israel, the Pharisees and the Herodians, as an

opportunity to provide for His work. He sees well in their hatred what was before Him; indeed, He knew it from the first, it need hardly be said. Still, the manifestation of their murderous hatred becomes the signal for this fresh step, the appointment of those that were to continue the work when the Lord should be no longer here in bodily presence Himself to carry it on. And so we have the twelve; He ordains them, “that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach,” etc. Ministry in the word has always the highest place in Mark — not miracles, but preaching. The healing of sickness and the casting out of the devils were signs accompanying the preached word. Nothing could be more complete. There is not only evidence that we see the servant depicted here, but that the servant was the Lord Himself, even as we saw in the beginning of this gospel.

Thus there was the appointment of those He pleased to call for the due execution of His mighty work on the earth. At this juncture it is that we find His relatives so greatly moved when they heard of all — the crowds — no time to eat, etc. It is a remarkable and characteristic fact mentioned by Mark only. “When his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold of him: for they said, He is beside himself.” It was mainly, I suppose, because of an entire devotedness which they could not appreciate; for just before we are told, that “the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.” To His friends it was mere infatuation. They thought He must be out of His mind. It must be so, more particularly to one’s relatives, where the powerful grace of God calls out and abstracts its objects from all natural claims. Such it always is in this world, and the Lord

Jesus Himself, as we find, had no immunity from the injurious charge on the part of His friends. But there is more; we have His enemies now, even the scribes that came from Jerusalem. “He hath Beelzebub,” say they, “and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.” The Lord condescends to reason with them — “How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.”

But thereon our Lord most solemnly pronounces their doom, and shows that they were guilty — not of sin, as men say, but of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. There is no such phrase as sin against Him in this sense. People often speak thus, Scripture never. What the Lord denounces is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasoning about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous unforgivable sin against Him. All sin, I presume, is sin against the Holy Ghost, who has taken His place in Christendom, and, consequently, gives all sin this character. Thus, lying in the Church is not mere falsehood toward man, but unto God, because of the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there. Here, on the contrary, the Lord speaks of unforgivable sin (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as “sin against the Holy Ghost,” but blasphemy against Him). What is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing the power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would be instantly relieved, if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to

plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible. The truth is, that as any sin of a Christian may be said to be sin against the Holy Ghost, what is especially the sin against the Holy Ghost, if there be anything that is so, is that which directly hinders the free action of the Holy Ghost in the work of God, or in His Church. Such might be said to be the sin, if you speak of it with precision. But what our Lord referred to was neither a sin nor the sin, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into, and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up, who will receive the Christ whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that generation was concerned, they were guilty of this sin, and they could not be forgiven. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus. They consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised. They still carried it on persistently, and it is always the case when men enter upon a bad course, unless sovereign grace deliver. The more that God brings out of love, grace, truth, wisdom, the more determinedly and blindly they rush on to their own perdition. So it was with Israel. So it ever is with man left to himself, and despising the grace of God. “He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness.” It is the final stage of rebellion against God. Even then they were blaspheming the Son of Man, the Lord Himself; even then they attributed the power of the Spirit in His service to the enemy, as afterwards still more evidently when the Holy Ghost wrought in His servants; then the blasphemy became complete.

And this is, I suppose, what is referred to in principle in Hebrews 6. Hebrews 10 seems to be different. Then it is the case of a person who had professed the name of the Lord utterly abandoning Him, and giving loose rein to sin. This is another form of sin and destruction.

In the case before us in the gospel of Mark, the enemies had shown their uncontrollable fury and hatred after the fullest evidence, and cast the worst imputation on the power they could not deny, but endeavoured to discredit to others by attributing it to Satan. It was clear that any, all other testimony after this was utterly vain. Hence, our Lord then turns to introduce the moral ground for a new call and testimony. The real object of God, the ulterior object in the service of Jesus, comes out. There was a testimony, and righteously, to that people in the midst of whom the Lord had appeared, where His ministry had displayed the mighty power of God in grace here below. Now our Lord intimates that it must be no longer a question of nature, but of grace, and this because of His mother and His brethren, who had been pointed out by some. “Behold,” said they, “thy mother and thy brethren without seek thee. He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them that sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.” In short, He owns no one henceforth because of any connection with Himself after the flesh. The only ground of relationship is the supernatural tie in new creation. Doing the will of God is the point. For this only grace avails: “the flesh profiteth nothing.”

Therefore, in the next chapter, we are given a sketch of His ministry from that time down to the very end. Such is the bearing of this chapter. It is the Lord's ministry in its great principles under that aspect, and viewed not only as a fact going on (as we have had ministry in general before this), but now in its connection with this special work of God. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Hence we see Him forming a people, founded upon submission to the will of God, and therefore by the preached word of God; and this pursued to the very close of all, with a view of the difficulties of those engaged in that work, or in the midst of the trials from this world which always attend such a ministry. Such is the Mark 4. Accordingly the first parable (for He speaks in parables to the multitude) is of a sower. This we have very fully given us with its explanation. Then follow some moral words of our Lord. "Is a candle," He says in the twenty-first verse, "brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?" It is not only that there is a word that acts upon the heart of man, but there is a light given (that is, a testimony in the midst of darkness). The point here is not merely the effect on man, but the manifestation of the light of God. This therefore should not be put under a bed to be concealed. God does not in ministry merely consider the effect upon the heart of man; there is much besides done for His own glory. There is the need not only of life, but of light; and this is what we have first of all — light that germinates far and wide, and seed producing fruit. Part of the scattered seed was picked up by the enemy, or in some other way less openly hostile it comes to nothing. But after the necessity of life is shown in order to fruit-bearing, we have then the value of light; and this not only for God's

glory though the first consideration, but also for man's guidance in this dark world. "Take heed what ye hear." Not only is there thus the word of God sown everywhere, but "take heed what ye hear." There is a mingling of what is dark and what is light, a mingling of a false testimony with a true, more particularly to be remembered when the question is raised whether there is a light from God. These Christians in particular have need to take care what they hear. They only have discerning power, and this therefore is brought in most appropriately after the first foundation is settled.

In the next place comes a parable peculiar to Mark. There is no part of his gospel which more thoroughly illustrates it than this: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." It is the Lord manifesting Himself at the beginning of the work of God in the earth, and then coming at the end of it, all the intermediate state where others appear being left out. It is the perfect servant inaugurating and consummating the work. It is the Lord Jesus at His first advent and at His second, in connection with ministry. He commences and crowns the work that had to be done. Where is anything like this to be found in other gospels? Turn to Matthew, for instance, and what a difference! There we have, no doubt, the Lord represented as sowing (Matt. 13); but when in the next parable the harvest at the end of the age is brought before us, He says to the reapers, etc. It

is not Himself who is said to do this work, but in that gospel the design requires us to hear of the authority of the Son of man. He commands His angels. They are all under His orders. He gives them the word, and they reap the harvest. Of course, this is perfectly true, as well as in keeping with God's aim in Matthew; but in the gospel of Mark the point is rather His ministry, and not authority over angels or others. The Lord is viewed as coming, and He does come; so that the one is just as certain as the other. Supposing, then, you take this parable out of Mark and put it into Matthew, what confusion! And suppose you transplant what is in Matthew into Mark, evidently there would not only be the rent of the one, but also the introduction of that which never would amalgamate with the other. The fact is, that all, as God has written it, is perfect; but the moment these portions are confounded, you lose the special bearing and appropriateness of each.

After this we hear of the grain of mustard seed, which was merely to show the great change from a little beginning into a vast system. That intimation was all-important for the guidance of the servants. They were thereby taught that material magnitude would be the result, instead of the work of the Lord retaining its primitive simplicity and small extent, spiritual power being the real greatness and the only true greatness in this world. The moment anything, no matter what it may be, in the Lord's work becomes naturally striking before men's eyes, you may rely on it that false principles have somehow got a footing within. There is more or less that which savours of the world. And therefore was it of great importance that, if their worldly greatness was to come, there should be a sketch of the great changes to

follow; and this you find given in such an orderly manner in Matthew. This was not Mark's object, but just enough for the guidance of the servants, that they should know that the Lord would surely accomplish His work, and do it perfectly; as He began it well, so would He end it well. But at the same time there would be no small change effected here below, when the little sowing of the Lord should grow into an aspiring object before men, as man loves to make it. "And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." This, therefore, is the only parable that is added here; but the Spirit of God lets us know that the Lord on the same occasion spoke a great many more. Others we have in Matthew, where full dispensational light was specially called for. It was sufficient for the object of our gospel to give what we have seen here. Not even the leaven follows, as in Luke.

But then, in the end of the chapter, we have another instructive appendix. It is no new thing for man's work to mar, as far as can be, the Lord's work — to turn service into a means of lordship here below, and make great that which at the present time has its worth in refusing to part from the scorn and reproach of Christ. For the flock is not great, but little: till He return, it is a despised work of a despised Master. We have the dangers to which those engaged in His work would be exposed. This, I think, is the reason why the record is here given of the tempest-tossed vessel in which the

Lord was, and the disciples, full of anxiety, trembled at the winds and the waves around them, thinking of themselves much more than of their Master. Indeed, they reproachfully turn to Him, and say, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Such, alas! are the servants — apt to be heedless of His honour, abundantly careful for themselves. “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” It was little faith; but was it not little love too? It was an utter forgetfulness of the glory of Him who was in the vessel. It did, however, bring out the secret of their hearts — they at least cared for themselves: a dangerous thing in the servants of the Lord. Oh, to be self-sacrificing! to care for nothing but Him! At any rate the comfort is this — He does care for us. The Lord accordingly rises at that call, selfish as it might be, of glaring unbelief; yet His ear heard it as the call of believers, and He pitied them. “He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm; so that even the shipmen feared exceedingly in the presence of such power; and said one to another, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

The next chapter (Mark 5) opens with a highly important incident connected with ministry. Here it is a single case of a demoniac, which makes the details all the more striking. In point of fact, we know from elsewhere that there were two. The gospel of Matthew, not in this only, but in various other cases, speaks of two persons; as, I suppose, because this fact fell in with his object. It was a recognized principle in the law, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established; and he among the evangelists on whom, so to speak, the mantle of the circumcision fell, — he it was who,

speaking in view of the circumcision, gives the required testimony for the guidance of those in Israel that had ears to hear. Nothing of the kind was before Mark. He wrote not with any special aim of meeting Jewish saints and Jewish difficulties; but, in truth, rather for others that were not so circumscribed, and might rather need to have their peculiarities explained from time to time. He evidently had humanity before him as wide as the world, and therefore singles out, as we may fairly gather, the more remarkable of the two demoniacs. There is again no thought here of delineating the destinies of Israel in the last days, without denying an. allusion typically here to that which is fully drawn out there. But I apprehend the special object of this chapter is to trace the moral effects of Christ's ministry, where it is brought home in power to the soul. We have, therefore, the most desperate case possible. It is neither a leper nor a paralytic; nor is it simply a man with an unclean spirit. Here is the minute specification of a case more appalling than any we can find elsewhere in the gospels, and none describes it with such power and intense naturalness, or so circumstantially, as our evangelist.

"When he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains." All human appliances but proved the superior might of the enemy. "Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him." What a picture of dreary wretchedness, the companion of desolation and of death! "And always,

night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." Utter degradation, too, weighed him down, the cruelty of degradation such as Satan loves to inflict upon man that he hates. "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many." Again the same trait, one may just remark, appears here as before — a most singular identifying of the evil spirit with the man. Sometimes it would seem as if it was but one, sometimes a kind of manifold personality. "He besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country." And the Lord accordingly casts the unclean spirits into the swine, which were destroyed.

However, it is not only deliverance, as we saw in Matthew, but there is the moral result on the soul. The people of the country come — for now it is the testimony of the effects of ministry; they come to Jesus, and seeing him that was possessed of the devil and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid; and they that saw it told them how it befell him that was possessed of the devil, and also concerning the swine. Mark their unbelief! Man showed that he cared less for Jesus than for Satan or the swine. "When he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him" the natural impulse of a renewed heart, true of every saint of God. There is no believer, I care not how feeble he may be,

who does not know this desire, unless he lose the sweet simplicity of truth, or, it may be, stifled by bad doctrine, such as putting him under law, which always produces fear and anxiety. But when a man is not poisoned by misuse of law, or other corrupt teaching, the first simple impulse of him who knows the love of Jesus is to be with Him. This is one reason why all Christians are spoken of as loving His appearing. (2 Tim. 4) Nor is it only a desire to be with Him, but that His glory should be made good everywhere. The soul right well knows that He who is so precious to the heart only needs to be known to others, only needs to be manifested before the world, to bring in the only power of blessing that can avail for such a world as this.

In the case before us, however, our Lord suffers him not. He shows that, no matter how true and right and becoming might be this sentiment of grace in the heart of the delivered man, still there is a work to be done. Those that are delivered are themselves to be deliverers. Such is the beneficent character and aim of the ministry of Jesus. If Jesus does His work, if He breaks the power of Satan that none else can touch, it is not merely that the delivered one should have his heart with Him, and forthwith desire to go and be with Him. In itself, indeed, it is due to his love, and it could not but be that he who has been taught of God what Jesus is, should long to be where He is. But as Jesus pleased not Himself, coming to serve God here below, so his sphere of service is in the place where he could tell others the great things which had been done for him. Accordingly the Saviour meets him with the words, “Go home to thy friends.”

Mark it well, dear brethren; we are apt to forget the injunction. It is not merely, Go to the world, or, Go to

every creature; but, “Go home to thy friends.” How comes it that there is such difficulty, often, in speaking to our friends? Why is it that persons who are bold enough with strangers, are so timid before their household, relatives, connections? It often tells a tale which it is well to bear in mind. We shrink from the comparison which our friends are so apt and sure to make; who test our words -however clear, and good, and sweet — by that which they have such abundant means of ascertaining in our daily ways. An inconsistent walk makes a coward, at least, before “our friends.” It would be well if it really had the effect of humbling us before all. Were there genuine lowliness with fidelity before God, there would be courage, not only before strangers, but before “our friends.” Here, however, the point simply amounts to this: The Lord would spread the message of grace, would send him to make it known to his friends; for it was clearly they who had best known in his case the awful and degrading power of Satan. They would, of course, be most interested in the men who were his familiars; and therefore there were special reasons, I doubt not, for it. For us, too, it is a good thing to bear it in mind. Not that a saved soul should only go to his friends; but it remains ever true and good that the secret of grace in the heart should send us to our friends, to make it known to those who have known our folly and sins, that they may hear of the mighty Saviour we have found. “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him.”

How sweet this identification of “Jesus” with “the Lord.” “How great things the Lord hath done for him.” The Saviour put it forth in the most general way, I believe, in uttering these words without special allusion to Himself. The man, on the other hand, I cannot doubt, was perfectly right. How often, when it may appear that there is a want of literal exactitude, in interpreting “the Lord” of “Jesus,” there is in truth a better carrying out of the mind of God. Mere literalism would have held slavishly to the letter of the Lord’s language. But oh how much deeper, and, withal, more glorifying to God it was, when the man saw underneath that great mystery of godliness — the Lord in the servant’s garb. He who was pleased to take the form of a servant was none the less the Lord. “He went and told how great things Jesus had done for him.”

Then follows the account of the Jewish ruler of the synagogue, who fell at the feet of Jesus, and besought Him greatly to heal his dying daughter. Having dwelt on the scene elsewhere, I need say the less here. The Lord goes with him, intimating His specified ministry in Israel — a work which goes down to the reality of death, under which they would be shown really to lie. But the Shepherd of Israel could raise from the dead. This seems to be the bearing of the case before us, and not a mere general inroad upon Satan’s power, which became the occasion and justification, if one may so speak, of carrying victoriously the glad tidings of God’s kingdom and goodness to man. This was true of the Lord’s ministry even while on the earth, the place where Satan reigns. His temptation in the wilderness proved Him stronger than the strong man, and therefore He spoils his goods, delivering the poor victims of Satan, and

making them to be the captors of him whose captives they were. But here we find that his heart, far from being turned away from Israel, yearned over their need, deep as it was. The call of Jairus is no sooner made than He goes to answer it. He alone could wake out of death's sleep the daughter of Zion; yet, ineffable grace! while on the road He is open to everybody. In the throng through which He had to pass was a woman having an issue of blood. It was a desperate case; for she had suffered much, and tried many physicians in vain. Such is the hapless lot of man away from God; human aid avails not. Where is the man who has had to do with what is in the world, and would not at once acknowledge the justice of the picture, the powerlessness of man in the presence of the deepest wants? But this was just the opportunity for One who, even as man ministering here below, wielded the power of God in His love. Jesus was the true and unfailing servant of God; and the woman, instead of seeking good from man as he is, and thus suffering more and more by the very efforts made to benefit her, unseen in the press behind, touches the garment of Jesus. "For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she wad healed of that plague." To have banished her ailment would have been too little for Jesus; for He is a perfect Saviour, and therefore is a Saviour not only for the body that had suffered so long, but for the soul's affections and peace. She got a better blessing than she sought. He not only staunched the issue of blood, but filled her trembling heart with confidence instead of the fear that had possessed her before. Nothing would have been morally right had she gone away with the reflection that she had stolen some virtue from Jesus. Emphatically banishing,

then, all dread from her spirit, He says to her, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” That is, He seals to her with His mouth the blessing which, as it were, her hand would else have seemed to have taken surreptitiously from Him.

Then, in the end of the chapter, the Lord is in the presence of death; but He will not allow death to abide His presence. “The damsel,” said He, (and how true it was!) “is not dead, but sleepeth.” Just so the Spirit says believers are asleep; as, “Those that sleep in Jesus God brings with him.” Here typically Israel is viewed according to the mind of God. Unbelief may weep, and wail, and create all sorts of tumult, and with little feeling after all; for it can equally even then laugh Jesus to scorn. But as for Him, He suffers none to enter but chosen ones — Peter, and James, and John, alone, with the parents. “And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.” So the Lord takes the damsel by the hand, after He had turned the others out, and straightway at His word she arises, and walks. “And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.” Why in this gospel more than any other does the Lord Jesus thus enjoin silence? I conceive it is because Mark’s is the gospel of service. The truth is, brethren, service is not a thing to be trumpeted by those engaged in it, or their friends. Whatever is from God, and is done toward God, may be safely left to tell its own tale. It is what God gives and does, not what man says, that is the real point of holy

service. Observe here, too, how the Lord, at least, perfect in every thing, not only does the work, but besides tenderly cares for her. There is the considerate goodness of the Lord to be remarked, that “something should be given her to eat.” In every matter, even in what might seem the smallest, Jesus took an interest. Thus He bore in mind that the maiden had been in this state of trance, and was exhausted. Whatever be the occasion that calls it forth, is it not the greatest of all things for our hearts to know how Jesus cares for us?

In Mark 6 we have our Lord again — now thoroughly despised. Here He is “the carpenter.” It was true; but was this all? Was it “the truth?” Such was man’s estimate of the Lord of glory; not merely the carpenter’s son, but here, and here only, He is Himself the carpenter, — “the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses, and Judah, and Simon. Are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” Beautifully, too, you may remark that, where there was this unbelief, our Lord would not remove it by dazzling feats of power, because there would have been no moral worth in a result so produced. He had given already abundant signs to unbelief; but men had not profited by them, neither was the word that He spake mixed with faith in them that heard it. The consequence is, that “He could there do no mighty work;” as here only it is recorded — yes, of the man before whom no power of Satan, no disease of man, nothing above, or below, or beneath, could prove the very smallest difficulty. But God’s glory, God’s will governed all; and the display of perfect power was in perfect lowliness of obedience. Therefore this blessed One could there do no mighty work. It is needless to say that it was no question of

power as to Himself. It was not in any wise that His saving arm was shortened; not that there was no virtue in Him longer, but there was the lovely blending of the moral glorifying of God with all that was wrought for man. In other words, we have not here the mere setting forth of the power of Jesus, but the gospel of His ministry. Therefore it is a weighty part of this, that because of unbelief He could do no mighty work there. He was really serving God; and if man only was seen, not God, no wonder that He could do no mighty work there. Thus, that which at first sight seems strange, the moment you take it in connection with the object of God in what He is revealing, all becomes striking, plain, and instructive.

And now He proceeds to act upon that appointment of the twelve, whom we saw, in Mark 3, He had ordained. “He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth.” It was in presence of the thorough contempt which had just shown itself that He gives them their mission. It was only when the extremest scorn fell on Him, so that He could do no mighty work there. He replies, as it were, in the most gracious and also conclusive manner, that it was from no lack of virtue, because He sends them two and two on their new and mighty errand. He that could communicate power, then, to a number of men — the twelve — to go forth and do any mighty work, certainly did not Himself want intrinsic energy, nor was it from any want of power to draw upon in God. Jesus invests them with His own power, as it were, and sends them out in all directions as witnesses, but witnesses of the ministry of Jesus. They were servants called after His own fashion; and so He commanded them that they should take nothing for their

journey, save a staff only; they were to go forth in the faith of His resources. Therefore, anything of human means would have been contrary to the very intention. In a word, we must remember that this was a special form of service suitable to that moment, and, in point of fact, rescinded by our Lord afterwards in very important particulars. In the gospel of Luke, we have carefully given us the change that takes place when the Lord's hour was come. It was not only that it was an hour come for Him, but it was a crisis for them, too. They had thenceforward to encounter a great change, because of the character of utter rejection, and, indeed, of suffering, on which the Lord was entering. He therefore cast them upon the ordinary resources of faith, using such things as they had; but as yet it was not so. On the contrary, the witnesses of Jesus to Israel were then going forth. It was in the face of unbelief against Himself, but unbelief answered by the fresh outflow of grace on His part, sending out messengers with extraordinary powers from Himself all over the land. And so He told them where to go, and "what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent" — a very important feature here added. John preached repentance; Jesus preached repentance, as did these apostles. And be assured, beloved friends, that repentance is an eternal truth of God for this time as much as for any other. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that the change of dispensation weakens (I

will not say merely the place of repentance for every soul that is brought to God, but) the duty of preaching repentance. We are not to leave it after a perfunctory sort, contenting ourselves with the assurance, that if a person believes, he is sure to repent; we ought to preach repentance, as well as to look for repentance in those who profess to have received the gospel. At any rate, it is equally clear that the Lord preached it, and that the apostles were to do and did the same. “They preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

Then we have Herod appearing upon the scene; and Herod, I take it, represents in Israel the power of the world — its usurping power, if you please. However this be, there he was in point of fact, the holder of the world’s power in the land, and ever, though not without qualms and struggles in the end, thoroughly opposed to the testimony of God. He was really hostile to it, not merely in its fullest forms, but at bottom also, in its first appearance and most elementary presentation. He had no love for the truth; he might like the man who preached it well enough, and at first hear him gladly; he might have many anxieties about his soul before God, and know perfectly well that he was doing wrong in his ordinary life; but, still, the devil managed to play the game so well, that although there was personal affection, or respect, at least, for the servant of God, the disastrous end comes, as it always will, when there is a fair trial in this world. No respect, no kindly feeling for any one or anything that is of God, will ever stand when Satan is allowed to work, and is thus free to accomplish his own deadly plan of ruining or thwarting the

testimony of God. This is what those engaged in the ministry of Christ must expect to see attempted, and will do well to resist. If this be the point, as I apprehend, the reason of its introduction here is not obscure. The Lord was sending out these chosen vessels. In the presence of this new action of His in the work, we learn how the world feels about it; not merely the ignorant world, nor the religious parties with their chiefs, but the highly cultivated profane world. And this is the way in which they treat it. They have the outward power which Satan finds means to make them use. They kill the witness of God. It may be only a wicked woman who stirs them up to do the deed; but be not deceived. It was not a question of Herodias merely. She was but the tool by which the devil brought it about: he has his own particular way; and in this case we have not only the circumstances, solemn as they are, but the spring of all in the opposition of Satan to God's testimony. The issue of it is, that if wicked men have power to kill, even if reluctant, he whose they are somehow compels them to use their power, when the opportunity arises. Fear of man, and notions of honour, are strong where God is unheeded: what may not follow where there is no conscience? That old serpent can manage to entrap the most prudent, just as Herod here fell into the trap. For his word to a wicked woman, passed in presence of his lords, John's head was struck off, and produced in a charger.

The apostles come to our Lord after their mission, and tell Him the result of their mission; or as it is said here, "told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught." It was not very safe ground: it were better to have spoken of what He had taught, and what

He was doing. As, however, the Lord corrects all most graciously, He takes them away into a desert place, and there He is found unwearied in His love. A hungry multitude was there. These disciples, only a little while before so full of what they had taught, and what they had done — was it not a worthy emergency for their labours now? Could they not help in the present distress? They seem not so much as to have thought of it. Alone, at any rate, in this scene, our Lord Jesus brings out in the plainest possible manner their utter failure. Mark the lesson well. It is especially, when there was somewhat of boastfulness, after they had been occupied with their own doings and teachings. Then it is that we find them thus powerless. They were at their wits' ends. They did not know what to do. Strange to say, they never thought of the Lord; but the Lord thought of the poor multitudes, and in His richest grace not only spread a table and fed the people, but makes the feeble disciples themselves to be the dispensers of His bounty, as afterwards they must gather up what remained.

After this, again, we find them exposed to a storm, and the Lord, joining them in their troubles, brings them safely, and at once, to the desired haven. Therein follows the scene of joy where Jesus is recognized, and the abundant blessing that attended His every footstep where He moved. As surely as Jesus thus blessed the poor world then, such and far more will He prove Himself at His return after the world will have done its worst. I do not doubt that this carries us to the end, when the Lord Jesus will rejoin His people after their manifold and sore troubles, after all their proved weakness, as well as exposure to outward storms. As He was in the place He had visited, so He will be in the

universal diffusion of power and blessing, when the tempest-tossed disciples shall have come safe to land.

Mark 7. But then there is another view necessary also in connection with ministry; we need to learn the prevalent feeling of the religious powers. Accordingly we have the traditionist in collision with Christ, as we had in the last chapter Herod with John the Baptist. Here it is the accredited leaders from Jerusalem, the scribes, before whom our Lord brings the most convincing evidence, that the principle and practice of their cherished traditions demoralise man and dishonour the word of God. The reason of the evil is manifest — it is from man. This is enough; for man is a sinner. There is nothing really good but what is from God. Show me anything from fallen man which is not evil. Tradition, as being man's supplement, is always and necessarily evil. The Lord puts it together with what He afterwards brings out — the condemnation of man's heart in all its depravity. There it is not only the mind of man, but the working of his corrupt feelings. This is not the time to dwell on this well known chapter, and the contrast it furnishes of Christ's display of God's all-perfect grace toward the greatest possible need — the woman who came to Him on account of her demoniac daughter. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation, who besought Him to cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But the Lord, trying her faith in order to give her a richer blessing, not only accomplishes what she desires, but puts the seal of His approval in the most striking manner upon her personal faith. "And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she

found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed."

Next we come to another tale, finishing the chapter, and strikingly characteristic of our gospel — the case of one deaf and dumb, whom Jesus met as He departed from these quarters into Galilee. "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." Here again the Lord shows us a beautiful sample of considerateness and tender goodness in the manner of His cure. It is not only the cure, but the manner of it, that we have so strikingly brought out here. Our Lord takes the man aside from the multitude. Who could intermeddle with that scene between the perfect servant of God and the needy one? "He puts his fingers into his ears." What would He not do to prove His interest? "And he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed." As He weighed the distressing results of sin, what a burden was upon His heart! It is a particular instance of the great truth we saw in Matthew the other night. With Jesus it was never bare power relieving man, but always His spirit entering into the case, feeling its character in God's sight, and its sad consequences for man too. The whole was borne upon His heart, and so, as here, He sighs, and bids the ears 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." Such might be the motto of Mark. The utterance of the multitude, of those that saw the fact, is just what is

illustrated throughout the entire gospel. “He hath done all things well.” It was not only that there was the power fully adequate to accomplish all He undertook, but “He hath done all things well.” He is the perfect servant everywhere, and under all circumstances, whatever may be the need. “He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

The next (Mark 8) must be our last chapter now, on which I will just say a word or two before closing. We have once more a great multitude fed; not the same, of course, as before. Here, not five thousand were fed, but four thousand; not twelve baskets of fragments remained over, but seven. There were outwardly less limits, and a less residue; but observe that seven, the normal number of perfection spiritually, is here. I consider, therefore, that contrariwise, and viewed as a figure, this was still more important than the other. There is no greater mistake in Scripture — and, indeed, it is true in moral questions — than to judge of things by their mere appearances. The moral bearing of anything you please is always of more importance than its physical aspect. In this second miracle the number fed was less, while the original supply was greater, yet the remainder gathered up was less. Apparently, therefore, the balance was greatly in favour of the former miracle. The truth is really this, that in the former case the intervention of men was prominent; here, though He may employ men, the great point is the perfectness of His own love, sympathy, and provision for His people, no matter what the need. It appears, therefore, that the seven has a deeper completeness than the twelve, both being significant in their place.

After this our Lord rebukes the disciples for unbelief, which comes out strongly now. The greater His love and compassion, the more perfect His care, the more painfully, alas! unbelief betrays itself even in the disciples, and yet more in others. But our Lord performs another cure, the record of which is peculiar to Mark. At Bethsaida, a blind man was brought. The Lord, for the express purpose, it seems to me, of showing the patience of ministry according to His mind, first touches his eyes, when partial sight follows. The man confesses in reply, that “he saw men like trees walking;” and the Lord applies His hand a second time. The work is done perfectly. Thus, not only did He heal the blind, but He did it well — a further illustration of what has been already before. us. If He puts His hand to accomplish, He does not take it away until all is complete, according to His own love. The man then saw with perfect distinctness. Thus all is in season. The double action proved the good Physician; as His acting so effective, whether by word or hand, whether by one application or by two, proved the great Physician.

The close of the chapter begins to open the faith of Peter in contrast with the unbelief of men, and even with what had been working among the disciples before. Now, things were hurrying on rapidly to the worst. Peter’s confession was therefore the more seasonable. The account differs very strikingly from what is found in Matthew. Peter is represented by Mark as saying simply, “Thou art the Christ;” while in Matthew the words are, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” “Hence you have no such thing in Mark as, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” The Church is built not exactly on the Christ or Messiah as such, but on the confession of “the

Son of the living God.” Hence we may see how beautifully the omissions of Scripture hang together. The Holy Ghost inspired Mark to notice no more than a part of the confession of Peter, and thus there is only a part of the blessing mentioned by our Lord. The highest homage to our Lord in Peter’s confession being omitted, the great change then at hand, which displays itself in the building of the Church, is consequently quite left out of Mark. There our Lord simply charges them that they were not to tell any man of Him,. the Christ. What an end of the testimony of His presence! The reason, too, is most affecting: “The Son of man must suffer many things,” etc. Such is the portion of Him, the true servant. He is the Christ, but it is no use to tell the people so any more; they have heard often, and will not believe it. Now He is going to enter upon another work: He is going to suffer. It is His portion. “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

After this point, He begins, in view of the transfiguration, to announce His approaching death. He gives it most circumstantially. He would guard His servants from supposing that He was in any wise taken by surprise by His death. It was an expected thing. It was what He knew, perfectly and circumstantially, before the elders and scribes did. The very people that were going to cause it knew nothing about it. They planned rather the reverse of the actual circumstances of His death. Still less did they know anything about His resurrection; they did not believe it when it came to pass; the Jews covered it up by a lie. But Jesus knew all about both, and now first breaks the tidings to His

disciples, intimating that their path must lie through the same pathway of suffering. Christ's suffering is here viewed as the fruit of the sin of man, which accounts for the fact, that there is not a word said about atonement here. There never was a greater misconception in looking at Scripture than to limit our Lord's sufferings to atonement: I mean upon the cross, and in death. Certainly, atonement was the deepest point in the sufferings of Christ, and one can understand how even Christians are apt to overlook all else in atonement. The reason why believers make atonement everything is because they make themselves everything. But if they were not unbelieving believers, they would see that there is a great deal more in the cross than the atonement; and surely they would not think less of Jesus if they were to see more the extent of His grace, and the profundity of His sufferings. Our Lord does not speak of His death here as. expiating sins. In Matthew, where He speaks of giving His life a ransom for many, of course there is atonement substantially. Christ expiates their sins, and this I call atonement. But here, where He speaks of being killed by men, is that atonement? It is painful that Christians should be so shut up and confused. Were not God dealing in judgment with the Saviour of sinners, there would have been no atonement. His rejection by men, though taken from God, is not the same thing. And, beloved friends, this is a more important and more practical question than many might be apt to think; but I must defer further remarks for the present. We have before us a new subject — the glory which our Lord immediately after speaks of in connection with His rejection and sufferings.

5.

Mark 9 - 16.

The transfiguration, as a matter of fact witnessed by the eyes of chosen witnesses, introduces naturally the great change that was about to be effected by the mighty power of God; for that wondrous scene was the passing vision of a glory that shall never pass away. Therein certain disciples were admitted to a sight of the kingdom of God coming with power, founded upon the rejection of Christ by man, and the maintenance and manifestation by-and-by of the power of that Jesus rejected of man, but glorified by God. Of course, our Lord's ministry had this double character. It was, as is everything in Scripture, presented to human responsibility before its result is established on God's part. There was every evidence and proof that man could ask; there was every moral manifestation of God; but man had no heart for it. Hence the only effect of such a witness was the rejection of Christ and of God Himself as thus morally represented here below. What, then, will God do? Surely He will make good His counsel by His own power; for nothing fails that is of Him, and every testimony of His must accomplish its aim. But then God waits; and, even before He lays the foundation for that great work of establishing His own kingdom and power, He gives a sight of it to those whom He is pleased to elect. Hence it is that the transfiguration was a kind of bridge, so to speak, between the present and the future, confronting men even now with God's plans! It is really the introduction, as far as a testimony and even a sample could go with believers, of that kingdom which should be set up and displayed in due time. Not

that the rejection of Christ ceases after this, but, on the contrary, goes on up to the cross itself. But in the cross, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see, by faith, the issue complete; man's rejection on the one side, and God's foundation actually laid on the other. Notwithstanding a testimony to it was on this holy mount brought before the sight of the disciples according to the sovereign choice of our Lord, He takes even out of the chosen twelve a chosen few to be the witnesses of His glory. But this gives it a very important and emphatic place in the synoptic gospels, which bring before us the Galilean progress of Christ; more particularly in the point of view of ministry we have this in our gospel.

The Lord having then taken up James and John, as well as Peter, was transfigured before these disciples. The glorified men, Elias with Moses, are seen talking with Him. Peter lets out his lack of appreciation of the glory of Christ, and the more remarkably, because only in the scene immediately before Peter had in striking terms testified to Jesus. But God must show that there is but One faithful witness; and the very soul that stood out brightly, we may say, for a little moment in the scene that preceded the transfiguration, is the same that manifests the earthen vessel more than any other in the transfiguration. "It is good," says Peter, "for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." It is evident, that although he might put the Saviour at the head of the three, he counted the others to be in a measure on a level with Him. At once we see the cloud overshadowing, and hear the voice out of it which maintains supreme undivided glory for the Son of God. "This" (says the

Father; for He it was who spoke) — “this is my beloved Son: hear him.”

You will observe that in Mark there is an omission. We have not here the expression of complacency. In Matthew this was made prominent, as we know. In Matt. 17 it is, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him,” I apprehend the reason was to set this in the most absolute contrast with His rejection by the Jewish people. So again, in the gospel of Luke, we have the testimony of Christ being God’s Son on the ground of hearing Him rather than Moses or Elias. “This is my beloved Son,” he says: “hear him,” omitting the expression of the Father’s complacency in Him. Assuredly He was always the object of the Father’s delight; but still there is not always the same reason for asserting it. Whereas, on comparing the testimony in 2 Peter 1, there is an omission of “hear him” found in the three gospels. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It is evident that the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ over the law and the prophets is not the point in Peter. The reason, I think, is obvious. That question had been already decided: Christianity had come in. It was not the point here to claim for Christ a place above the law and the prophets, but to show simply the glory of the Son in the eyes of the Father, and His delight or loving satisfaction in Him; just as afterwards he makes it plain that in all the word of God the one object of the Holy Ghost is Christ’s glory; for holy men of old spake as they were moved of Him. Scripture was not written by man’s will; rather, God had a great purpose in His word, which was not met by the transient application of certain parts of it to isolated facts, to this person or to that. There was one grand

uniting bond throughout all prophecy of Scripture. The object of it all was this — the glory of Christ. Separate prophecy from Christ, and you divert the stream of the testimony from the person of Him to whom that testimony is most due. It contains not mere warnings about peoples, nations, tongues, or lands; about facts providential, or otherwise; about kings, empires, or systems in the world: Christ is the Spirit's object. So on the mount we hear the Father there witnessing to Christ, who supremely was the object of His delight. The kingdom was ensampled there; Moses also, and Elias; but there was One object pre-eminently before the Father, and that object was Jesus. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The point was not exactly hearing Christ, but hearing the Father about Him, so to speak. Such was the emphatic object here; and therefore, as I believe, are the words "hear him" omitted. In Matthew we have the fullest form of all, which the more enforces the call to hear Him. Luke gives the "hear him," but the expression, both in Mark and Luke, of personal complacency was not so much the ruling aim. Of course, there were common points in all, but I just notice this for a little passing moment to illustrate their differences.

Then we find, without dwelling upon all the particulars, that our Lord tells the disciples that the vision was to be kept hid till the rising from the dead. His own resurrection would introduce an entirely new character of testimony. Then it was that the disciples could make manifest, without hindrance, this great truth. The Lord was thus teaching them their total incapacity, until that great event brought in a new work of God, the basis of a

new and unrestricted testimony, old things being passed away, and all things made new to the believer.

This, I think, was very important, if we look at the disciples here as called to service. It is not in man's power to take up the service or the testimony of Christ as he will. From this is evident the weighty place that the rising from the dead holds in Scripture. Outside Christ sin reigned in death. In Him was no sin; but, until the resurrection, there could not be a full testimony rendered to His glory or His work. And so in point of fact it was. After this follow, passingly, a notice of the difficulties, which shows how truly our Lord had measured their incapacity; for the disciples were really under the influence of the scribes themselves at this time.

At the foot of the mountain another scene opens. At the top we have seen, not the kingdom of God only, but the glory of Christ; and, above all, Christ as the Son, whom the Father proclaimed now as the One to be heard beyond the law or the prophets. This the disciples never did understand till the resurrection; and very manifest is the reason, because the law had naturally its place till then, and the prophets came in as corroborating the law and maintaining its just authority. The raising from the dead does not in any wise weaken either the law or the prophets, but it gives occasion to the display of a superior glory. However, at the foot of the mountain there is an awful evidence to present facts, just after the sample of what is to come. Meanwhile, before the kingdom of God is established in power, who is the potentate that influences men and that reigns in this world? It is Satan. In the case before us most manifest was his power — a power that the disciples themselves

could not eject from the world because of their unbelief. Here, again, we see how manifestly service is the great thought all through this gospel. The father is in distress, for it was an old story; it was no new thing for Satan to exercise this power over man in the world. From his childhood such was the case; even as from the earliest day it was the history of man. In vain had the father appealed to those that bore the name of the Lord in the world; for they had wholly failed. This drew out from our Lord Jesus a severe reproof of their unbelief, and especially for the reason that they were His servants. There was no straitness in Him; no stint of power on His part. It was really unbelief in them. Hence He could only say, when this manifestation of the weakness of the disciples was brought before Him, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.” For the Lord would not hide the full extent of the power of Satan, but allows the child to be torn by his power before their eyes. There could be no question that the spell was unbroken up to this. The disciples had in no way subdued, suppressed, or crushed the power of Satan over the child. “And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.” It was really the history of this world in contrast with the new creation. Of the world, or rather kingdom, of God, a vision at least had just been seen in the transfiguration.

Thus the chapter is first of all founded upon the announced death of Christ in utter rejection, and the certainty of God’s introducing His kingdom of glory for

the Christ rejected of men. In the next place, the uselessness or impossibility of testifying the transfiguration till the rising from the dead is affirmed: then it would be most timely. Lastly follows the evidence of what the power of Satan really is before the kingdom of God finally comes in power, where the testimony of it even was unknown. The fact is, that under the surface of this world viewed by the disciples, and brought to light by the presence of our Lord Jesus, there is this complete subjection of man from his earliest days, as it is said. The power of Satan over man is too plain, and the servants of the Lord only proved how powerless they were, not from any defect of power in Christ, but because of their own lack of faith to draw it out. The Saviour at once proceeds to act, letting the man see that all turns on faith. In the meantime, what Christ brings into evidence is the power that deals with Satan before the kingdom is established. Such is the testimony at the foot of the mountain. The kingdom will surely in due time be established, but meanwhile faith in Christ defeats the enemy's power. It is beyond doubt that this was the true want and only remedy. Faith in Him alone could secure a blessing; and so, accordingly, the father tremblingly appeals to the Lord in his distress. "Lord," he says, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." "When Jesus then saw the people running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." The work was done. Apparently the child was no more; but the Lord "took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose." In the house He gave the disciples another profitable lesson in the way of ministry.

Such, then, it is easy to see, is the point that comes out here. The Lord shows that, along with the unbelief, is the lack of the sense and confession of dependence on God. This alone also judges the energy of nature, “This kind,” he says, “goes not forth, but by prayer and fasting.” While the power is in Jesus, faith alone draws it out; but that faith is accompanied by the sentence of death upon nature, as well as the looking up to God, the only source of power.

Next, we have another lesson, still connected with the service of the Lord, while the power of Satan is at work in the world, before the kingdom of God is established. We must learn the state of these servants’ own hearts. They desire to be something. This falsifies their judgments. They departed thence, and passed into Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, “The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying.” At first sight how singular, yet how frequent, is this lack of ability to enter into the words of Jesus! To what is it owing? To self unjudged. They were ashamed to let the Lord know what the true reason was; but the Lord brings it out. He came to Capernaum, 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 they bad disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.” No wonder there was little power in the presence of Satan; no wonder there was little understanding in presence of Jesus. There was a dead weight behind — this spirit of thinking of themselves, of desiring some distinction to

be seen and known of men now. It was evident unbelief of what God feels, and is going to display, in His kingdom. For there is but one thought before God — He means to exalt Jesus. They were thus quite out of communion with God about the matter. Not only had those failed who were not on the mount, but just as plainly James, Peter, and John, all had failed. How little has special privilege or position to do with the humility of faith! This, then, is the true secret of powerlessness, either as against Satan, or for Jesus. Further, the connection of all this with the service of the Lord must, I think, be manifest.

But there is another incident, too, peculiar to Mark, of which we hear directly after this. The Lord rebukes them by taking a child, and thence reading them humility. What a withering censure of their self-exaltation! Even John proves how little the glory of Christ, which makes one content to be nothing, had entered into his heart now. The day is coming when it would all take deep root there — when they would really gather everlasting profit from it; but for the present it was the painful demonstration that there is something more needed than the word even of Jesus. So it is, then, that John immediately after this turns to our Lord, complaining of some one that was casting out demons in His name — the very thing they had failed to do. “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name.” Was not this, then, a matter for thankfulness of heart to God? Not a bit of it! Self in John took fire at it, and became the mouthpiece of the strong feeling which animated them all. “Master, we saw” — not “I” merely; he spake for all the rest. “We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followed not us: and we forbad him,

because he followeth not us." It is evident, then, that no previous reproof had in any way purged out the self-exalting spirit, for here it was again in full force; but Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Another most weighty lesson in the service of Christ is this. The question here is not one of dishonour done to Christ. None in this case contemplates or allows any act whatever contrary to His name. On the contrary, it was a servant going forward against the enemy, believing in the efficacy of the Lord's name. Had it been a question of enemies or false friends of Christ, overthrowing or undermining His glory, he that "is not for him is against him; and he that gathereth not with him scattereth abroad." Wherever it is a question of a true or a false Christ, there cannot be a compromise of one jot of His glory. But where, on the contrary, it was one who may have been unintelligent, perhaps, and who certainly had not been so favoured in point of circumstances as the disciples, yet who knew the value and efficacy of His name, Jesus graciously shields him. "Forbid him not: 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." He certainly had faith in the Lord's name; and by faith in that name he was mighty to do what, alas! disciples were feeble to do. It was evident that there was a spirit of jealousy, and that the power which manifestly wrought in one who had never been so privileged outwardly as they, instead of humbling the disciples to think of their own shortcoming and lack of faith, led even John to cast about for some fault to find, some plea for restraining him whom God had honoured.

Hence, our Lord here brings out an instruction, not of course at variance with, but totally different from what

we had in Matthew 12:30. Their distinctive use in the right time and circumstances, I cannot but hold to be by no means unimportant. Mark's, you will remember, is the gospel of service; and it is the question of ministry here. Now the power of God in this does not depend upon position. No matter how right (that is, according to God's will) the position may be, that will not give ministerial power to the individuals who are in the truest position. The disciples, of course, were in an unimpeachable place as following Christ — there could be nothing more certainly right than theirs; for it was Jesus that had called them, gathered them round Himself, and sent them out clothed with a measure of His own power and authority. For all that, it was evident that there was weakness in practical manifestation. There was a decided want of faith in drawing upon the resources of Christ, as against Satan. They were, then, quite right in cleaving to Christ, and in following none other; they were right in abandoning John for Jesus; but they were not right in letting any reason hinder their acknowledgment of God's power, which "ought in another who was not in that blessed position which was their privilege. Accordingly our Lord rebukes this narrow spirit sternly, and lays down a principle seemingly counter, but really harmonious. For there is no contradiction in the word of God here, or anywhere else. Faith may rest assured that nothing in Matthew 12 opposes Mark 11. No doubt at first sight there might appear to be such a difference; but look, read again, and the difficulty vanishes.

In Matt. 12:30 the question was totally different. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." There it was a question

of Christ Himself — of the glory and the power of God in Jesus here below. The moment it comes to be a question of His person, assailed by adversaries, then he that is not with Christ is against Christ. Do persons allow anything to lower His person now? All questions are secondary in comparison with this, and any one who is indifferent to it would deliberately take the part of the enemy against Christ. He who would sanction the dishonour of Jesus proves, no matter what his pretensions may be, that he is no friend of the Lord, and that his work of gathering can but scatter.

But in the mind of the Lord given in Mark, wholly different matter was before them. Here it was a question of a wan who was exalting Christ according to the measure of his faith, and certainly with no inconsiderable power. The disciples, therefore, in this case ought to have acknowledged and delighted in the testimony to Christ's name. Granted that the man was not so favoured as they; but surely the name of Christ was exalted in desire and in fact. Had their eye been single, they would have owned that, and thanked God for it. And here, therefore, the Lord impresses on them a lesson of another kind altogether: "He that is not against me is for me." Thus, wherever it is a question of the Spirit's power put forth in Christ's name, it is evident that he who is thus used of God is not against Christ; and if God answers that power, and uses it for the blessing of man and the defeat of the devil, we ought to rejoice.

Need I say how applicable both these lessons are? We know, on the one hand, that in this world Christ is rejected and despised. Such is the main groundwork of Matthew. Accordingly, in Matt. 12, we have Him not

merely the object of loathing, but this even to those who had the outward testimony of God at that time. Hence, no matter what way be the reputation, the traditional respect or reverence of men; if Christ be dishonoured, they that prize and love Him can have no fellowship for an instant. On the other hand, take the service of Christ, and in the midst of all that bears the name of Christ around, there may be those whom God employs for this or that important work. Am I to deny that God makes use of them in His service? Not for an instant. I acknowledge the power of God in them, and thank Him; but this is no reason why one should abandon the blessed place of following Jesus. I say not, “following us,” but “following Him.” It is evident that the disciples were occupied with themselves, and forgot Him. They were wishing ministry to be their monopoly, instead of a witness to Christ’s name. But the Lord puts everything in its place; and the same Lord who in Matt. 12 insists on decision for Himself, where His enemies had manifested their hatred or contempt of His glory, is no less prompt in the gospel of Mark to indicate the power that had wrought in the ministry of His unnamed servant. “Forbid him not,” says He. “for he that is not against me is for me.” Was he against Christ who used, on John’s own showing, His name against the devil? The Lord thus honours, in any quarter or measure, the faith that knows how to make use of His name, and gain victories over Satan. Hence, therefore, if God employs any man — say, in winning sinners to Christ, or delivering saints out of the bondage of wrong doctrine, or whatever else the snare may be — Christ owns him, and so should we. It is a work of God, and homage to Christ’s name, though not a around, I repeat, for making light of following Christ, if He have graciously accorded

such a privilege. It is a most legitimate ground, no doubt, for humbling ourselves, to think how little we do as entrusted with the power of God. Thus we have to maintain Christ's own personal glory, on the one hand, always holding that fast; we have, on the other hand, to acknowledge whatever ministerial power God is pleased in His own sovereignty to employ, and by whomsoever. The one truth does not in the slightest degree interfere with the other.

Further: let me draw your attention now to the appropriateness of the place of, the incident in this gospel. You could not transpose either it or the solemn word in Matthew. It would altogether mar the beauty of the truth in both. On the one hand, the day of despising and rejecting Christ is the day for faith to assert His glory; on the other hand, where there is the power of God, I must acknowledge it. I may have been myself rebuked for my own lack of power just before; but, at least, let me own God's hand wherever it is manifest.

Our Lord follows this up with a remarkably solemn instruction, and in His discourse shows that it was no question merely of "following us," or of anything else, for a time. Now, no doubt, the disciple follows Him through a world where stumbling-blocks abound, and dangers on every side. But more than that, it is a world into the midst of whose snares and pitfalls He deigns to cast the light of eternity. Hence it was not a mere question of the moment; it was far beyond the objects of party strife. Our Lord, therefore, strikes at the root of what was at work in the mistaken disciples. He declares that whosoever gives a cup of water in His name — the smallest real service rendered to need — "because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose

his reward." Yet more, it was not merely a question of rewards on the one side, but of eternal ruin on the other. They had better look to themselves while they yet may. Flesh is a bad and ruinous thing. No matter who or what the person may be, man is not safe in himself, especially, let me add, when in the service of Christ. There is no ground where souls are more apt to get astray. It is not merely in questions of moral evil. There are men that pass us, and. that, so to speak, run the gauntlet of such seductions unscathed; but it is quite another and a very much more dangerous thing, where, in the professed service of the Lord, there is the nursing of that which is offensive to Christ, and grieves the Holy Ghost. This lesson comes out, not merely for saints, but also for those that are still under sin. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." Deal unsparingly with every hindrance, and this on the simplest moral ground; most urgent, personally, and imminent is the peril they entail. These things would test a man, and sift whether there be anything in him Godward.

The end of Mark 9 reminds one of the end of 1 Cor. 9, where the apostle Paul, no doubt also speaking about service, deepens in his tone of warning, and intimates that service may often become a means of detecting not state only, but unreality. There may not be open immorality in the first instance, but where the Lord is not before the soul in constant self-judgment, evil grows apace out of nothing more than ministry, as, indeed, the fact proved among the Corinthians; for they had been thinking much more about gift and power than about Christ; and with what moral results? The apostle begins by putting the case in the strongest way to himself; he

supposes the case of his own preaching ever so well to others, but abandoning all care about holiness. Occupied with his gift and others, such an one yields without conscience to that which the body craves after, and the consequence is total ruin. Were it Paul, he must become a castaway, or reprobate (i.e., disapproved of God). The word is never used for a mere loss of reward, but for absolute rejection of the man himself. Then, in 1 Cor. 10, he applies the ruin of the Israelites to the danger of the Corinthians themselves.

Our Lord in this very passage of Mark similarly warns. He deals with the slight which John put upon one that was manifestly using the name of Christ to serve souls, and defeat Satan. But John had unwittingly ignored, if not denied, the true secret of power altogether. It was really John that needed to take care — holy and blessed man as he was. There was an evident mistake of no ordinary gravity, and the Lord proceeds from this to the most solemn warning that He ever gave in any discourse that is recorded of Him. No other sets eternal destruction more manifestly before us in any part of the gospels. Here, above all, we are admitted to hear continually ringing in our ears the awful dirge, if I may so call it, over lost souls: “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” On the other hand, our Lord turns the occasion also to the profit of His own, though this too be a solemn warning. Hence observe, before the subject closes, how He lays down grand principles that involve the whole of this question. Thus we are told, “Every one shall be salted with fire.” It is well to remember that grace does not hinder this universal test of every soul here below. “Every one,” says He, “shall be salted with fire;” but besides that,

“Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.” These are two distinct things.

No child of man, as such, can escape judgment. “It is appointed unto man once to die, but after that the judgment.” The judgment, in one form or another, must be the portion of the race. Whenever you look at what is universal, man, being a sinner, is an object for divine judgment. But this is far from the whole truth. There are those here below who are delivered from God’s judgment even in this world — who have even now access into His favour, and rejoice in hope of His glory. What then of them? They that hear Christ’s word, and believe Him who sent the Saviour, have eternal life, and enter not into judgment. But are they not put to the proof? Assuredly they are; but it is upon another principle altogether. “Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt” It is clearly not a question there of a mere sinful man, but of that which is acceptable to God; and, therefore, not salted with fire, but salted with salt. Not that there is not that Which tests and proves the ground of the heart in those that belong to God; but even so their special nearness to Him is borne in mind.

Thus, whether it be the general dealing in a judicial manner with man, with every soul as such; whether it be the special case of such as belong to God (i.e., every sacrifice acceptable to God, as brought in by Christ on the foundation of His own great sacrifice), the principle is as clear as it is comprehensive and sure for every one; not only for every sinner, but for every believer, however truly acceptable to God by Jesus Christ our Lord. With the glorified saints, although it be not, of course, the judgment of God, certainly there is no concealment of the truth, though there is that also which God in His

grace makes to be mighty to preserve; not pleasant, it may be, but the preservative energy of divine grace with its sanctifying effects. This, I think, is what is meant by being “salted with salt.” The figure of that well known antiseptic does not leave room for the pleasant things of nature with all their evanescence. “Salt,” says our Lord, “is good.” It is not an element which excites for a moment, and passes away; it has the savour of God’s covenant. “Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?” How fatal is the loss! How dangerous to go back! Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another; “that is, have purity first, then peace mutually, as the apostle James, too, exhorts in his epistle. Purity deals with nature, and resists all corruption it preserves by the mighty power of God’s grace. Following this, but of no worth without it, is “peace one with another.” May we possess this peace also, but not at the cost of intrinsic purity, if we value God’s glory!

This closes, then, our Lord’s ministry — the connection of ministry, as it appears to me, with the transfiguration. That manifestation of the power of God could not but impress a new and suited character upon those concerned.

In the next chapter our Lord introduces other topics, and very strikingly, because it might be hastily gathered, that if all is founded upon death and resurrection, and is in view of the coining glory, such a ministry as this must take no account of relationships which have to do with nature. The very reverse is the case. It is precisely when you have the highest principles of God brought in, that everything God has ever owned on the earth finds its right place. It was not when God gave the law, for

instance, that the sanctity of marriage was vindicated, most. Every one ought to know there is no relationship so fundamental for man on earth — there is nothing that so truly forms the social bond — as the institution of marriage. What is there naturally in this world so essential for domestic happiness and personal purity, not to speak of the various other considerations, on which all human relationships so much depend? And yet it is remarkable that, during the legal economy, there was the continual allowance of that which enfeebled marriage. Thus, the permission of divorce for trivial reasons, I need not say, was anything but a maintenance of its honour. Here, on the contrary, when in Christ the fulness of grace came, and, more than that, when it was rejected, when the Lord Jesus Christ was announcing that which was to be founded upon His approaching humiliation unto death, and when He was expressly teaching that this new system could not be, and was not to be, proclaimed until His own rising from the dead, He also insists on the value of the various relations in nature. I admit the connection with the resurrection is only shown in Mark; but, then, this points out the true import of it, because Mark naturally indicates the importance of that epoch and glorious fact, for the service of Christ in testimony, for bringing the truth out to others.

Here, however, the Lord having disposed of that which was eternally momentous, having traced it up to the end of all this passing scene, having shown the results for those that have no part nor lot in the matter, as well as for such as enjoy the grace of God in its preservative force, namely, those that belong to Christ, now takes up the relation of these new principles to nature, to what

God Himself acknowledged in what you may call the outside world.

The Lord here, then, stands up as the vindicator, first of all, of the relationship of marriage. He teaches that in the law, important as it was, Moses did not assert the vital place of marriage for the world. On the contrary, Moses permitted certain infractions of it because of Israel's state. "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother." That is, even the nearest other relationship, so to speak, disappears before this relationship. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." To this it came; but for this most simple yet thorough. exposition of God's mind, we are indebted to the Lord Jesus, the great witness of grace, and of eternal things, now connected with His own rejection and the kingdom of God coming with power, and the setting aside of the long spell of the devil. It is the same Jesus who now clears from the dust of ruin God's institutions even for the earth.

A similar principle runs through the incidents that follow here. "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them." Had His followers drank deeply into that grace of which He was full, they would, on the contrary, have estimated very differently the feeling that presented the infants to their Master. The truth is that the spirit of self was yet strong; and what so petty and

narrow? Poor, proud Judaism bad tinctured and spoilt the feelings, and the little ones were despised by them. But God, who is mighty, despiseth not any; and grace, understanding the mind of God, becomes an imitator of His ways. The Lord Jesus rebuked them; yea, it is said, “He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” In both these particulars, so all-important for the earth, we find the Lord Jesus Christ proving. that grace, far from not giving nature its place, is the only thing that vindicates it, according to God.

Another lesson follows, in a certain sense even more emphatic, because more difficult. It might be thought that God’s mercy occupies it specially with a child. But let us suppose an unconverted man, and one, too, living according to the law, and in great measure satisfied with his fulfilment of its obligations, what would the Lord say of him? How does the Lord Jesus Christ feel about such a one? “When he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what 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.” The man was totally in the dark; he had no saving knowledge of God; he had no knowledge really of man; he had no sense of the true glory of Christ; he did honour Him, but merely as one differing in degree from himself. He owned Him to be a good Master, and he wanted to glean what he could from Him as a good disciple. He put himself, therefore, so far on a level with Jesus, assuming his competency to carry out the words and ways of Jesus. It is evident, therefore, that sin was unjudged, and that

God Himself was unknown in the heart of this young man. The Lord, however, brings out his state fully. “Thou knowest the commandments,” He says, putting expressly forward those duties that touch human relations. “He answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” The Lord does not refuse his statement — raises no question how far he had fulfilled the second table. On the contrary, it is added, that “Jesus, beholding him, loved him.” Many find a serious difficulty in that assertion of the Spirit of God. To my own mind it is as instructive as it is beautiful. Not that the man was converted, for he was clearly not; not that he knew the truth, for the difficulty arises from the fact that he was a stranger to it; not that the man was following Jesus, for, on the contrary, we are told that he went away from Jesus; not that his heart was made happy in God’s grace, for in truth he turned back sorrowing. There was the deepest reason, therefore, to regard him with pain and anxiety, if you judged the man according to what was eternal. Nevertheless, it remains true that Jesus looked upon him, and beholding him, loved him.

Is there nothing in this which traverses ordinary evangelicalism? An important lesson for us, I cannot doubt. The Lord Jesus, from the very fact of His perfect perception of God and His grace, and the infinite value of eternal life before His Spirit, was free enough, and above all that crowds human judgment, to appreciate character and conduct in nature, to weigh what was conscientious, to love what was lovable in man simply as man. So far from grace weakening, I am persuaded it always strengthens such feelings. To many, no doubt, this might seem strange; but they are themselves the

proof of the cause that hinders. Let them examine and judge whether the word does not reveal what is here drawn from it. And let it be noted that we have this emphatic statement, too, in the gospel which reveals Christ as the perfect servant; which gives us, therefore, to know how we are to serve wisely as we follow Him. Nowhere do we see our Lord bringing it out so distinctly as here. The same truth substantially is given in Matthew and in Luke; but Mark gives us the fact the He "loved him." Nor do Matthew and Luke say a word about there being the perception of the reason why the Lord thus loved the young man: only Mark tells us that, "beholding him," Christ loved him. Of course, that is the great point of the case. The Lord did admire what there was naturally lovely in a man that had been preserved providentially from the evil of this world, and sedulously trained in the law of God, in which he had hitherto walked blamelessly, even desiring to learn from Jesus, but without divine conviction, of his own sinful lost estate. Certainly the Lord did not deal with either the narrowness or the roughness which we so often betray. Indeed we are, alas! poor servants of His grace. The Lord far better knew, and far more deeply felt than we, the state and danger of the young man. Nevertheless there is much for us to weigh in this, that Jesus, beholding him, loved him.

But, further, "He said unto him, One thing thou lackest." But what a thing it was! "One thing thou lackest." The Lord denies nothing that he could in any way or ground commend; He owns everything that was naturally good. Who could blame, for instance, an obedient child? a benevolent and conscientious life? Am I, therefore, to attribute all this to divine grace? or to deny the need of

it? No! these things I own as a boon belonging to man in this world, and to be valued in their place. He that says they have no value whatever slights, to my mind, evidently, the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, he who would make this, or any thing of the sort, a means of eternal life, evidently knows nothing as he ought to know. Thus the subject calls, no doubt, for much delicacy, but for what will find a true recognition in Jesus, and in the blessed word of God, and nowhere else. Our Lord therefore says, “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.” Is not this what Jesus had done, though in an infinitely better way? Certainly He had given up all things, that God might be glorified in the salvation of lost man. But if He had emptied Himself of His glory, how infinite were the results of that humiliation unto death itself?

The young man wanted to learn something of Jesus; but was he prepared to follow even in the earthly path of the Crucified? was he willing only to have the thing he lacked supplied? to be a witness of divine self-renunciation in grace to the wretched? to abandon treasures on earth, content to have treasure in heaven? If he had done this, however, Christ could not but ask more; even as here He adds, “And come, take up the cross, and follow me.” The Saviour, as we may thus see, goes not before the light of God; He does not anticipate what would be brought out in a day that was at hand. There is no premature announcement of the astonishing change which the gospel in due time made known; but the heart was fully tested. Man in his best estate is proved to be lighter than vanity, compared with Him who alone is good; and this revealed in Christ, His only

adequate image and expression. Yet could He who thus (not to speak of the unfathomable depths of His cross) distanced man look on this young man with love, as He beheld him spite of evident shortcoming. Still, whatever he was, this did not in the smallest degree take the man out of the world. His heart was in the creature, yea, even in the unrighteous mammon: he loved his property, i.e., himself, and the Lord in His test dealt with the root of the evil. And so the result proved. For it is said, “He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” Now, it appears to me that our Lord’s way of dealing is the perfect pattern; and first in this, that He does not reason from that which was not yet revealed by God. He does not speak of His own bloodshedding, death, or resurrection. They were not yet accomplished, and it would have been quite unintelligible. Not one of the disciples themselves knew anything really, though the Lord had repeatedly spoken of it to the twelve. How was this man to understand? Our Lord did what was of all importance — He dealt with the man’s own conscience. He spread before him the moral value of what He had done Himself, giving up all that one had. This was the last thing the young man thought of doing. He would have liked to have been a benefactor — a generous patron; but to give up everything, and to follow Christ in shame and reproach, he was in no way prepared to do. The consequence was, that on his own ground the man was left perfectly convicted of stopping short of good brought before him in the good Master to whom he had appealed. What the Lord may have done for him afterwards is a matter for the Lord to tell. As it is not revealed in the word, it is not for us to know; and it would be vain and wrong to conjecture. What God has shown us here is, that no

matter what the extent of moral following the law, even in a most remarkable case of outward purity and of apparent subjection to the requirements of God, all this does not deliver the soul, does not make a man happy, but leaves him perfectly miserable and far from Christ. Such is the moral of the rich young ruler, and a very weighty one it is.

Next, our Lord applies the same principle to the disciples; for now He has done with the outward question. We have seen nature in its best estate seeking Christ in a sense; and here is the result of it: after all the man is unhappy, and leaves Jesus, who now looks upon His disciples in their utter bewilderment, and enlarges on the hindrance of wealth in divine things. Alas! this they had thought to be an evidence of God's blessing. And if they were only rich, how much good might they not do! "How hardly," says Christ, "shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God!" He further says to them, already astonished, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. 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." The Lord insists only the more solemnly on this lesson, so little understood even by disciples. They, beyond measure surprised, say among themselves, "Who, then, can be saved?" which gives the Lord the opportunity to explain what lies at the bottom of the whole question; that salvation is a question of God, and not of man at all. Law, nature, riches, poverty — no matter what, that man loves or fears — has nothing in the least to do with the saving of the soul, which rests entirely on the power of God's grace, and nothing else: what is impossible for man is possible with God. All

turns, therefore, on His grace. Salvation is of the Lord. Blessed be His name! with God all things are possible: otherwise how could we, how could any, be saved?

Peter then begins to boast a little of what the disciples had given up, whereon the Lord brings in a very beautiful word, peculiar to Mark. “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s, but he shall receive a hundredfold.” Be it noted that only Mark mentions “and the gospel’s.” It is service that is so prominent here. Others may say, “for His sake;” but here we read, “for my sake, and the gospel’s.” Thus the value of Christ personally is, as it were, attached to the service of Christ in this world. Whosoever, then, is thus devoted, He says, “shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” It is a wonderful conjunction, but most true, because it is the word of the Lord and the reckoning of faith.

All things that Christ possesses are ours who believe in Him. No doubt such a tenure does not satisfy the covetous heart; but it is a deep and rich satisfaction to faith, that, instead of wanting something to distinguish self by, one has the comfort of knowing that all the Church of God possesses on the earth belongs to every saint of God on the earth. Faith does not seek its own, but delights in that which is diffused among the faithful. Unbelief counts nothing its own, save what is for selfish use. If, on the contrary, love be the principle that animates me, how different! But then there is an accompaniment — “with persecutions.” These you must have somehow, if you are faithful. They that will live

godly cannot escape it. Am I only to have it in that way because they have it? It is better to have it myself in the direct following of Christ. In His warfare, what eau be so honourable a mark? But it is a mark that is found especially in the service of Christ. Here, again, we see how thoroughly Mark's character is preserved throughout. "But many that are first shall be last, and last first," we find solemnly added here as in Matthew. It is not the beginning of the race that decides the contest; the end of it necessarily is the great point. In that race there are many changes, and withal not a few slips, falls, and reverses.

The Lord then goes on to Jerusalem, that fatal spot for the true prophet. Man was wrong in averring that never a prophet had arisen in Galilee; for, indeed, God left Himself not without witnesses even there. But, assuredly the Lord was right, that no prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. The religious capital is exactly the place where the true witnesses of God's grace must die. Jesus, therefore, in going up to Jerusalem was well understood by the disciples, and so, amazed, they follow Him. Little were they prepared for that course of persecution which was to be their boast in a day that was coming, and for which they would be surely strengthened by the Holy Ghost. But it was not so yet. "Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up" (how gracious! not only "I," but "we," go up) "to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles." Then we have the persecution unto

death (and what a death 1) fully laid before us. James and John at this critical time show how little flesh, even in the servants of God, ever enters into His thoughts. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” no matter in whom. Again, it was not in obscure ones, but in those that seemed to be somewhat, that the ugliness of the flesh especially betrayed itself; and therefore it is these who furnish the lesson for us. “Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.” Their mother appears in another gospel — in the gospel where we might expect such a relationship after the flesh to appear; but here, alas! it is the servants themselves, who ought to have known better. As yet their eyes were holden. They turned the very fact of their being servants into a means of profiting the flesh even in the kingdom of God itself. They seek to gratify the flesh here by the thought of what they would be there. So the Lord brings out the thought of their heart, and answers them with a dignity peculiar to Himself. “Ye know not,” He says, “what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with. the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said 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; but [it shall be given] to them for whom it is prepared.” He is the servant; and even in view of the time of glory He preserves the same character. A high place in the kingdom is only for those “for whom it is prepared.”

But it was not merely that these two disciples betrayed themselves; the ten made the secret of their heart manifest enough. It is not alone by the fault of one or

another that the flesh becomes apparent; but how do we behave ourselves in presence of the displayed faults of others? The indignation which broke out in the ten showed the pride of their own hearts, just as much as the two desiring the best place. Had unselfish love been at work, their ambition would assuredly have been a matter for sorrow and shame. I do not say for lack of faithfulness in resisting it; but I do say, that the indignation proved that there was a feeling of self, and not of Christ, strongly at work in their hearts. Our Lord, therefore, reads a rebuke to the whole, and shows them that it was but the spirit of a Gentile that animated them against the sons of Zebedee; the very reverse of all He, could not but look for in them, even as it opposed all that was in Himself. Intelligence of the kingdom leads the believer into. contentedness with being little now. The true greatness of the disciple lies in the power of being a servant of Christ morally, going down to the uttermost in the service of others. It is not energy that ensures this greatness in the Lord's estimate now, but contentedness to be a servant, — yea, to be a slave in the lowest or least place. As for Himself, it was not merely that Christ did come to minister, or be a servant; He had that which He alone could have — the title, as the love, to give His life a ransom for many.

From Mark 10:48 comes the last scene — the Lord presenting Himself to Jerusalem, and that too, as we are all aware, from Jericho. We have His progress to Jerusalem, beginning with the cure of the blind man. I need not dwell on the details, nor on His entrance on the colt of the ass into the city as the King. Neither need I say more about the fig tree (one day cursed, the next day seen to be thoroughly withered up), nor the Lord's

call to faith in God, and its effect in and on prayer. Nor need we enter particularly into the question of authority raised by the religious leaders.

The parable of the vineyard, with which Mark 12 opens, is very full on that which concerns the servants responsible to God. Then we hear of the rejected stone that was afterwards made the head of the corner. Again, we have the various classes of Jews coming before Him with their questions. Not that there are not important points in every one of these scenes that pass before our eyes; but the hour will not permit me to touch upon any of them at length. I therefore pass by advisedly these particulars. We have the Pharisees and the Herodians rebuked; we have the Sadducees refuted; we have the scribe manifesting what the character of the law is; and, indeed, in answer to his own question, the Lord shed the full light of God upon the law, but at the same time accompanied by a remarkable comment on the lawyer. “When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” It is a beautiful feature in our Lord’s service — this readiness to own whatever was according to truth, no matter where He found it. Then our Lord puts His own question, as to His own person, according to the Scripture, gives a brief warning as to the scribes, and marks in contrast the poor blessed widow, His own pattern of true devotedness and of real faith in this most spiritually destitute condition of the people of God on earth. How He passes completely by the wealth that merely gave what it felt not, to single out, and for ever consecrate, the practice of faith where it might be least expected! The widow that had but the two mites had cast in all her living into the treasury of God, and this at

a time decrepit and selfish beyond all precedent. Little did that widow think that she had found even upon earth an eye to own, and a tongue to proclaim, what God could form for His own praise in the heart and by the hand of the poorest woman in Israel!

Then our Lord instructs the disciples in a prophecy strictly conformed to the character of Mark. This is the reason why here alone, where you have the service of the Lord, the power by which they could answer in times of difficulty is introduced into this discourse. Hence our Lord passes by all distinctive reference to the end of the age — an expression which does not here occur. The fact is that, although it be the prophecy which in Matthew looks to the end of the age,, still the Spirit does not so specify here; and for the simple reason, that a prophecy which was forming them for their service accounts for what is left out and what is put in, as compared with Matthew. Another thing I may notice is, that in this prophecy alone He says, that not only the angels, but even the Son does not know that day (Mark 13:32). The reason of this peculiar, and at first sight perplexing, expression seems to me to be, that Christ so thoroughly takes the place of One who confines himself to what God gave to Him, of One so perfectly a minister — not a master, in this point of view — that, even in relation to the future, He knows and gives out to others only what God gives Him for the purpose. As God says nothing about the day and the hour, He knows no more. Remark also how characteristically here our Lord describes both Himself, and the workmen, and their work. There is no such dispensational description, as in Matthew’s parable of the talents, but simply this: “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." The features of difference in Matthew are plain. There is far greater augustness. He who goes a long way provides as it were for the length of His absence. Here, no doubt, He goes; but He gives "authority to His servants." Who can fail to note the suitability for the purpose of Mark? Again, He gives "to every man his work." Why, may we not ask, are these expressions found here? Surely, because in Mark it is the very subject-matter of the gospel all through; for even in a prophecy the Lord would never abandon the great thought of service. Here it is not so much the question of giving gifts or goods as of work to be done. Authority is given to His servants. They wanted it. They do not take it without a title. It is doing His will, rather than trading with His gifts. We find this last most appropriately in Matthew; because the point in the earlier gospel was the peculiar chance to follow the Lord's leaving the earth, and the Jewish hopes of Messiah, for the new place He was going to take on ascending to heaven. There He is the giver of gifts — a thing quite distinct in its character from the ordinary principle of Judaism; and the men trade with them, and the good and faithful enter finally into the joy of their Lord. Here it is simply the service of Christ, the true servant.

In Mark 14 come the profoundly interesting and instructive scenes of our Lord with the disciples, not now predicting, but vouchsafing the last pledge of His love. The chief priests and scribes plot in corruption and violence for His death; at Simon's house in Bethany a woman anoints His body to the burying, which discerns many hearts among the disciples, and draws out the

Master's, who next is seen, not accepting an offering of affection, but giving the great and permanent token of His love — the Lord's Supper. The state of Judas's heart appears in both cases — conceiving his plan in the presence of the first, and going out to accomplish it from the presence of the last. Thence our Lord goes forth; not yet to suffer the wrath of God, but to enter into it in spirit before God. We have seen all through the gospel that such was His habit, to which I merely call attention now in passing. As the cross was of all the deepest work and suffering, so most assuredly the Lord did not enter upon Calvary without a previous Gethsemane. In its due season comes the trial before the high priest and Pilate.

The crucifixion of our Lord is in Mark 15, with the effect upon those that followed Him, and the grace that wrought in the woman — men betraying their abject fear in the presence of death, but women strengthened, the weak truly made strong.

Finally, in Mark 16, we have the resurrection; but this, too, strictly in keeping with the character of the gospel. Accordingly, then we have the Lord risen, the angel giving the word to the women — "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter" — a word found only in Mark. The reason is manifest. It is a mighty consideration for the soul. Peter, despising the word of the Lord really, though not intentionally; Peter, not receiving that word mixed with faith into his heart, but, on the contrary, trusting himself, was pushed into a difficulty where he could not stand, even before man or woman, because he had never borne the temptation upon his spirit before God. So it was then that Peter

broke down shamefully. From the Lord's look he began to feel his conduct acutely; but while the process went on he needed to be confirmed, and our Lord therefore expressly named Peter in His message — the only one who was named. It was an encouragement to the faint heart of His fallen servant; it was an acting of that same grace which had prayed for him even before he fell; it was the Lord effecting for him a thorough restoration of his soul, which mainly consists of the application of the word to the conscience, but also to the affections. Peter's was the last name, according to man, that deserved to be then named; but it was the one who needed most, and that was enough for the grace of Christ. Mark's gospel is ever that of the service of love.

On the cross and resurrection, as here presented, I need not speak now. There are peculiarities both of insertion and of omission, which illustrate the difference in scope of what is here given us from that which we find elsewhere. Thus we have the reviling of the very thieves crucified with Him, but not the conversion of one. And as in the seizure of Jesus we hear of a certain young man who fled naked when laid hold of by the lawless crowd that apprehended the Saviour, so before the crucifixion they compel in their wanton violence one Simon a Cyrenian to bear His cross. But God was not forgetful of that day's toil for Jesus, as Alexander and Rufus could testify at a later day. Not a word here of the earth quaking, either at the death of Christ, or when He rose; no graves are seen opened; no saints risen and appearing in the holy city. But of the women we hear who had ministered to Him living, and would have still ministered when dead, but that the resurrection cut it short, and brought in a better and enduring light, the

Lord employing angelic ministry to chase away their fright by announcing that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was risen. How admirably this is in keeping with our gospel need scarcely be enlarged on.

I am aware that men have tampered with the closing verses (9-20) of Mark 16, as they have sullied with their unholy doubts the beginning of John 8. In speaking of John, it will be my happy task to defend that passage from the rude insults of men. Assured they are wrong, I care not who they may be nor what their excuses. God has given the amplest array of external vouchers; but there are reasons far weightier, internal grounds of conviction, which will be appreciated just in proportion to a person's understanding of God and His word. Impossible for man to coin a single thought, or even a word fit to pass. So it is in this scene.

I also admit that there are certain differences between this portion and the previous part of chap. 16. But, in my judgment, the Spirit purposely put them in a different light. Here, you will observe, it is a question of forming the servants according to that rising from the dead for which He had prepared them. Had the gospel terminated without this, we must have had a real gap, which ought to have been felt. The Lord had Himself, before His resurrection, indicated its important bearing. When the fact occurred, had there been no use made of it with the servants, and for the service, of Christ, there had been, indeed, a grievous lack, and this wonderful gospel of His ministry would have left off with as impotent a conclusion as we could possibly imagine. Chapter 16 would have closed with the silence of the women and its source, "for they were afraid." What conclusion less worthy of the servant Son of God! What

must have been the impression left, if the doubts of some learned men had the slightest substance in them? Can any one, who knows the character of the Lord and of His ministry, conceive for an instant that we should be left with nothing but a message baulked through the alarm of women? Of course, I assume what is indeed the fact, that the outward evidence is enormously preponderant for the concluding verses. But, internally also, it seems to me impossible for one who compares the earlier close with the gospel's aim and character throughout, to accept such an ending after weighing that which is afforded by the verses from 9 to 20. Certainly these seem to me to furnish a most fitting conclusion to that which otherwise would be a picture of total and hopeless weakness in testimony. Again, the very freedom of the style, the use of words not elsewhere used, or so used by Mark, and the difficulties of some of the circumstances narrated, tell to my mind in favour of its genuineness; for a forger would have adhered to the letter, if he could not so easily catch the spirit of Mark.

I admit, of course, that there was a particular object in the earlier verses as they now stand, and that the providence of God wrought therein; but surely the ministry of Jesus has a higher end than such providential ways of God. On the other hand, if we receive the common conclusion of the gospel of Mark, how appropriate all is! Here we have a woman, and no ordinary woman, Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus, who was now dead and risen, had once cast seven devils; and who, therefore, so fit a witness of the resurrection-power of God's Son? The Lord had come to destroy the works of the devil; she knew this, even

before His death and resurrection: who then, I ask, so suitable a herald of it as Mary of Magdala? There is a divine reason, and it harmonizes with this gospel. She had experimentally proved the blessed ministry of Jesus before, in delivering herself from Satan's power. She was now about to announce a still more glorious ministry; for Jesus had now by dying destroyed Satan's power in death. "She went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept." This was untimely sorrow on their part: what a thrill of joy that ought to have sent to their hearts. Alas! unbelief left them still sad and unbiassed. Then "he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." Here was an important practical element to remember in the service of the Lord — the dulness of men's hearts, their consequent opposition and resistance to the truth. Where the truth does not concern men much, they slight without fear, hatred, or opposition. Thus, the very resistance to the truth, while it shows in a certain sense, no doubt, man's unbelief, demonstrates at the same time that its importance leads to this resistance. Supposing you tell a man that a certain chief possesses a great estate in Tartary; he may think it all very true, at any rate he does not feel enough about the case to deny the allegation; but tell him that he himself has such an estate there: does he believe you? The moment something affects the person, there is interest enough to resist stoutly. It was of practical moment that the disciples should be instructed in the feelings of the heart, and learn the fact in their own experience. Here we have it so in the case of our Lord. He had told them plainly in His word; He had announced the resurrection over and over and over

again; but how slow were these chosen servants of the Lord! what patient waiting upon others should there not be in the ministry of those with whom the Lord had dealt so graciously! There again we find, that if it be of moment, it is most especially so in the point of view of the Lord's ministry.

After this the Lord appears Himself to the eleven as they sat at meat, and "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them Which had seen him after he was risen." Yet a most gracious Master He proves Himself one that knew well how to make good ministers out of bad ones; and so the Lord says to them, immediately after upbraiding them with their incredulity, "Go ye into all the world, and. preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is the importance not only of the truth, but of its being openly and formally confessed before God and man; for clearly baptism does symbolically proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ; that is the value of it. "He that believeth and is baptized." Do not you pretend that you have received Christ, and then shirk all the difficulties and dangers of the confession. Not so: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is not a word about baptism in this last case. A man might be baptized; but without faith, of course it would not save him. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Believing was the point. Nevertheless, if a man professed ever so much to believe, yet shrank from the publicity of owning Him in whom he believed, his profession of faith was good for nothing; it could not be accepted as real. Here was an important principle for the servant of Christ in dealing with cases.

Further, outward manifestations of power were to follow: “These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils.” By-and-by the power of Satan is to be shaken thoroughly. This was only a testimony, but still how weighty it was! The Lord in this case does not say how long these signs were to last. When He says, “Teach [make disciples of] all nations [or the Gentiles], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” He adds, “And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [or age].” That is, He does connect His continuance with their discipling, baptizing, and teaching all the Gentiles what He had enjoined. This work was thus to go on till the end of the age; but as for the signs of Mark 16, with marvellous wisdom He omits all mention of a period. He does not say how long these signs were to follow them that believe. All He said was, that these signs were to follow; and so they did. He did not promise that they were to be for five, or fifty, for a hundred, or five hundred years. He simply said they were to follow, and so the signs were given; and they followed not merely the apostles, but them that believe. They confirmed the word of believers wherever they were found. It was but a testimony, and I have not the slightest doubt, that as there was perfect wisdom in giving these signs to accompany the word, so also there was not less wisdom in cutting the gift short. I am assured that, in the present fallen state of Christendom, these outward signs, so far from being desirable, would be an injury. No doubt their cessation is a proof of our sin and low estate; but at the same time there was graciousness in His thus withholding these signs towards His people when their continuance threatened

no small danger to them, and might have obscured His moral glory.

The grounds of this judgment need not be entered into now; it is enough to say that undoubtedly these signs were given. “They shall 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.” Thus there was a blow struck at the prolific source of evil in the world; there was the expression of God’s rich grace now to the world; there was the active witness of the beneficence of divine mercy in dealing with the miseries everywhere occurrent in the world. These are, I think, the characteristics of the service, but then there remains a striking part of the conclusion, which I venture to think none but Mark could have written. No doubt the Holy Ghost was the true author of all that Mark wrote; and certainly, the conclusion is one that suits this gospel, but no other. If you cut off these words, you have a gospel without a conclusion. Accepting these words as the words of God, you have, I repeat, a termination that harmonizes with a truly divine gospel; but not merely that — here you have a divine conclusion for Mark’s gospel, and for no other. There is no other gospel that this conclusion would suit but Mark’s; for observe here what the Spirit of God finally gives us. He says, “After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven.” You might have thought, surely, that there was rest in heaven now that Christ’s work on earth was done, and so perfectly done; more particularly as it is here added,,and he sat on the light hand of God.” If there is such a session of Christ spoken of in this place, the more it might be supposed that

there was a present rest, now that all His work was over; but not so. As the gospel of Mark exhibits emphatically Jesus the workman of God, so even in the rest of glory He is the workman still. Therefore, it seems written here that,, while they went forth upon their mission, they were to take up the work which the Lord had left them to do. “They went forth and preached everywhere” — for there is this character of largeness about Mark. “They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” Thus Mark, and no one else, gives us the picture most thoroughly, the whole consistent up to the last. Would a forger have kept up the bold thought of “the Lord working with them,” while every other word intimates that He was then at least quiescent?

Thus have we glanced over the gospel of Mark, and have seen that the first thing in it is the Lord ushered into His service by one who was called to an extraordinary work before Him, even John the Baptist. Now, at last, when He is set down at the right hand of God, we find it said that the Lord was working with them. To allow that verses 9 to the end are authentic scripture, but not Mark’s own writing, seems to me the lamest supposition possible.

May He bless His own word, and give us here one more proof that, if there be any portion in which we find the divine hand more conspicuous than another, it is precisely where unbelief objects and rejects. I am not aware that in all the second gospel there is a section more characteristic of this evangelist than the very one that man’s temerity has not feared to seize upon, endeavouring to root it from the soil where God planted it. But, beloved friends, these words are not of man.

Every plant that the heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. This shall never be rooted up, but abides for ever, let human learning, great or small, say what it will.

1 Here is found one of the few exceptional dislocations, if not the only one, in Mark; for it would appear from Matt. 9:18, that while the Lord was speaking of the wine and the bottles the jailor Jairus came about his daughter. This is only given (in Mark. 5) by Mark.

Luke

Luke 1 - 8.

The preface of Luke’s gospel is as instructive as the introduction of either of the two preceding gospels. It is obvious to any serious reader that we enter a totally different province, though all be equally divine; but here we have a stronger prominence given to human motive and feeling. To one who needed to learn more of Jesus, writes another godly man, inspired of God, but without drawing particular attention to the fact of inspiration, as if this were a doubtful matter; but, on the contrary, assuming, as all Scripture does, without express statement, that the written word is the word of God. The purpose is, to set before a fellow Christian — a man of rank, but a disciple — an account, full, accurate, and orderly, of the Lord Jesus, such as one might give that had thorough acquaintance with all the truth of the matter, but in fact such as none could give who was not inspired of God for the purpose. He lets us know that there were many of these memoirs formed on the tradition of those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. These works have departed; they were human. They were, no doubt, well-intentioned; at least there is here no question of heretics perverting the truth, but of men attempting in their own wisdom to set forth that which only God was competent rightly to make known.

At the same time Luke, the writer of this gospel, apprises us of his motives, instead of presenting a bare and needless statement of the revelation he had received. “It seemed good to me also,” etc., is in

contrast with these many that had taken it in hand. They had done the work in their fashion, he after another sort, as he proceeds next to explain. Clearly he does not refer to Matthew or Mark, but to accounts that were then handed about among Christians. It could not be otherwise than that many would essay to publish a relation of facts so weighty and engrossing, which, if they had not themselves seen, They had gathered from eye-witnesses conversant with the Lord. These memoirs were floating about. The Holy Ghost distinguishes the writer of this Gospel from these men quite as much as joins him with them. He states that they depended upon those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. He says nothing of the kind about himself, as has been rashly inferred from the phrase “to me also,” etc., but, as is evident, proceeds to give a wholly different source for his own handling of the matter. In short, he does not intimate that his account of these things was derived from eye-witnesses, yet speaks of his thorough acquaintance with all from the very first, without telling us how he came by it. As for the others, they had taken in hand to “set forth in order a declaration of these things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses.” He does not impute falsehood; he affirms that their histories were derived from the traditions of men who saw, heard, and waited on Christ here below; but he attributes no divine character to these numerous writers, and intimates the need of a surer warrant for the faith and instruction of disciples. This he claims to give in his gospel. His own qualification for the task was, as one that had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto Theophilus in order that he

“might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed.”

In that expression, “from the very first,” he lets us into a difference between his own gospel and the memoirs current among Christians. “From the very first”, means that it was an account from the origin or outset, and is fairly rendered in our version. So it is that we find in Luke that he traces things with great fulness, and lays before the reader the circumstances that preceded and that accompanied the whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ up to His ascension to heaven.

Now, he does not enter more than other inspired writers do into an assertion or explanation of his inspired character, which Scripture assumes everywhere. He does not tell us how it was he acquired his perfect understanding of all he communicates. It is not the way of inspired writers to do either. They speak “with authority,” even as our Lord taught “with authority;” “not as the scribes” or tradition-mongers. He claims indeed the fullest acquaintance with the subject, and the statement of which would not suit any other evangelist but Luke. It is one who, though inspired like the rest, was drawing his friend and brother with the cords of a man. Inspiration does not as a rule in the least degree interfere with the individuality of the man; still less would it here where Luke is writing of the Son of God as man, born of a woman, and this to another man. Hence he brings out in the preface his own thoughts, feelings, materials for the work, and the blessed aim contemplated. This is the only gospel addressed to a man. This naturally fits, and lets us into the character of the gospel. We are here about to see our Lord Jesus preeminently set forth as man, man most really as such

— not so much the Messiah, though, of course, that He is; nor even the minister; but the man. Undoubtedly, even as man He is the Son of God, and so He is called in the very first chapter of this gospel. The Son of God He was, as born into the world; not only Son of God before He entered the world, but Son of God from everlasting. That holy thing which should be born of the virgin was to be called the Son of God. Such was His title in that point of view, as having, a body prepared Him, born of a woman, even of the Virgin Mary. Clearly, therefore, this indicates, from the beginning of the gospel, the predominance given to the human side of the Lord Jesus here. What was manifest in Jesus, in every work and in every word of His, displayed what was divine; but He was none the less man; and He is here viewed as such in everything. Hence, therefore, it was of the deepest interest to have the circumstances unerringly marked out in which this wondrous man entered the world, and walked up and down here. The Spirit of God deigns by Luke to open the whole scene, from those that surrounded the Lord with the various occasions that appealed to His heart, till His ascension. But there is another reason also for the peculiar beginning of St. Luke. Thus, as he of the evangelists most of all approaches the great apostle of the Gentiles, of whom to a certain extent he was the companion, as we know from the Acts of the Apostles, counted by the apostle one of his fellow-labourers, too, we find him acting, by the Holy Ghost’s guidance, upon that which was the great distinguishing character of the apostle Paul’s service and testimony — “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

Accordingly our gospel, although it is essentially Gentile, as it was addressed to a Gentile and written by a Gentile, begins with an announcement that is more Jewish than any other of the four gospels. It was precisely so with Paul in his service. He began with the Jew. Very soon the Jews proceeded to reject the word, and prove themselves unworthy of eternal life. Paul turned to the Gentiles. The same thing is true of our gospel, so akin to the apostle's writings, that some of the early Christian writers imagined that this was the meaning of an expression of the apostle Paul, far better understood of late. I refer to it now, not because of any truth in that notion, for the remark is totally false; but at the same time, it shows that there was a kind of feeling of the truth underneath the error. They used to imagine that Paul meant the gospel of Luke when he said, "My [or our] Gospel." Happily most of my hearers understand the true bearing of the phrase enough to detect so singular an error; but still it does show that even the dullest of men could not avoid perceiving that there was a tone of thought, and current of feeling, in the gospel of Luke which harmonized very largely with the apostle Paul's testimony. Yet it was not at all as bringing out what the apostle Paul calls his gospel, or "the mystery of the gospel," etc.; but certainly it was the great moral groundwork through which it lay — at any rate, which most thoroughly accorded with, and prepared for it. Hence it is, after presenting Christ in the richest grace to the godly Jewish remnant, that we have first and fully given by Luke the account of God's bringing the first-begotten Son into this world, having it in His purpose to put in relation with Him the whole human race, and most especially preparing the way for His grand designs. and counsels with regard to the Gentiles.

Nevertheless, first of all, He justifies Himself in His ways, and shows that He was ready to accomplish every promise that He had made to the Jews.

What we have, therefore, in the first two chapters of Luke, is God's vindication in the Lord Jesus presented as the One in whom He was ready to make good all His old pledges to Israel. Hence the whole scene agrees with this feeling on God's part towards Israel. A priest is seen righteous according to the law, bus his wife without that offspring which the Jews looked for as the mark of God's favour towards them. Now God was visiting the earth in grace; and, as Zechariah ministered in the priest's office, an angel, even there a stranger, except for purposes of pity towards the miserable betimes (John 5), but long unseen as the witness of the glorious ways of God, announced to him the birth of a son, the forerunner of the Messiah. The unbelief even of the godly in Israel was apparent in the conduct of Zacharias; and God reproved it with inflicted dumbness, but failed not in His own grace. This, however, was but the harbinger of better things; and the angel of the Lord was despatched on a second errand, and re-announces that most ancient revelation of a fallen paradise, that mightiest promise of God, which stands out from all others to the fathers and in the prophets, and which, indeed, was to compass within itself the accomplishment of all the promises of God. He makes known to the virgin Mary a birth no way connected with nature, and yet the birth of a real man; for that man was the Son of the Highest — a man to sit upon the throne, so long vacant, of His father David.

Such was the word. I need not say that there were truths still more blessed and profounder than this of the throne of Israel, accompanying that announcement, on

which it is impossible to dwell now, if we are tonight to traverse any considerable part of our gospel. Suffice it to say, we have thus all the proofs of God's favour to Israel, and faithfulness to His promises, both in the forerunner of the Messiah, and in the birth of the Messiah Himself. Then follows the lovely burst of praise from the mother of our Lord, and soon after, when the tongue of him that was smitten dumb was loosed, Zacharias speaks, first of all to praise the Lord for His infinite grace.

Luke 2 pursues the same grand truths: only there is more at hand. The opening verses bring this before us. God was good to Israel, and was displaying His faithfulness accordingly to, not the law, but His promises. How truly the people were in bondage. Hostile Gentiles had the upper hand. The last great empire predicted in Daniel was then in power. "It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed [or enrolled]. (And this taxing [or enrolment] was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one to his own city." Such was the thought of the world, of the imperial power of that day, the great Roman beast or empire. But if there was a decree from Caesar, there was a most gracious purpose in God. Caesar might indulge his pride, and count the world his own, in the exaggerated style of human ambition and self-complacency; but God was now manifesting what He was, and oh, what a contrast. The Son of God, by this very deed, providentially enters the world at the promised place, Bethlehem. He enters it after a different sort from what we could have ever drawn from the first gospel, where we have Bethlehem

still more significant]y mentioned: at any rate, prophecy is cited on the occasion as to the necessity of its being there. That information even the scribes could render to the Magi who came to adore. Here there is nothing of the sort. The Son of God is found not even in an inn, but in the manger, where the poor parents of the Saviour laid him. Every mark follows of the reality of a human birth, and of a human being; but it was Christ the Lord, the witness of the saving, healing, forgiving, blessing grace of God. Not only is His cross thus significant, but His birth, the very place and circumstances being all most evidently prepared. Nor this only; for although we see not here Magi from the East, with their royal gifts, their gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, laid at the feet of the infant king of the Jews, here we have, what I am persuaded was yet more beautiful morally, angelic converse; and suddenly, with the angel (for heaven is not so far off), the choirs of heaven praising God, while the shepherds of earth kept their flocks in the path of humble duty.

Impossible, without ruining, to invert these things! Thus you could not transplant the scene of the Magi into Luke, neither would the introduction of the shepherds, thus visited by the grace of God by night, be so proper in Matthew. What a tale this last told of where God’s heart is! How evident from the very first it was, that to the poor the gospel was preached, and how thoroughly in keeping with this Gospel! and we might truly affirm the same — I will not say of the glory that Saul saw and taught — but most certainly of the grace of God which Paul preached also. This does not hinder that still there is a testimony to Israel; although sundry signs and tokens, the very introduction of the Gentile power, and

the moral features of the case, also make it evident that there is something more than a question of Israel and their King. Nevertheless, there meets us here the fullest witness of grace to Israel. So even in the words, somewhat weakened in our version, where it is said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be,” — not to all people, but “to all the people.” This passage does not go beyond Israel. Manifestly this is entirely confirmed by the context, even if one did not know a word of that language, which, of course, proves what I am now advancing. In the next verse it is, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” It is evident that, as far as this goes, He is introduced strictly as the One who was to bring in His own person the accomplishment of the promises to Israel.

The angels go farther when they say, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will in men.” It is not exactly good will toward men, which is here the point. The word expresses God’s good will and complacency in men; it does not say exact]y in man, as if it were only in Christ, though surely this was true in the very highest sense. For the Son of God became, not an angel, but really a man, according to Hebrews ii. It was not the cause of angels that He undertook, or was interested about: it was men He took up. But here appears a good deal more: it is God’s delight in man now that His Son is become a man, and witnessed by that astonishing truth. His delight in men, because His Son becoming a man was the first immediate personal step in that which was to introduce His righteousness in justifying sinful men by the cross and resurrection of Christ, which is at hand. Thereby in virtue of that ever-

accepted person, and the efficacy of His work of redemption, He could have also the selfsame delight in those that were once guilty sinners, now the objects of His grace for ever. But here, at any rate, the person, and the condition of the person too, by whom all this blessing was to be procured and given, were before His eyes. By the condition of the person is meant, of course, that the Son of God was now incarnate, which even in itself was no small proof, as well as pledge, of the complacency of God in man.

Afterwards Jesus is shown us circumcised, the very offering that accompanied the act proving also still more the earthly circumstances of His parents — their deep poverty.

Then comes the affecting scene in the temple, where the aged Simon lifts up the child in his arms; for it had been "revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." So he goes by the Spirit into the temple at this very time. "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, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It is evident that the whole tone is not what we may call formal; it was not that the work was done; but undoubtedly there was virtually in Christ "God's salvation" — a most suitable truth and phrase for the companion of him whose fundamental point was "God's righteousness." The Spirit might not yet say "God's righteousness", but He could say "God's salvation." It was the person of the Saviour, viewed according to the prophetic Spirit, who would, in due time, make good everything as to God and man.

“Thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten”, — or rather to reveal “the Gentiles;” a light for the revelation of the Gentiles- “and the glory of thy people Israel.” I do not regard the former as a millennial description. In the millennium the order would be exactly inverse; for then God will assuredly assign to Israel the first place, and to the Gentiles the second. The Spirit gives Simeon a little advance upon the terms of the prophetic testimony in the Old Testament. The babe, Christ, was a light, he says, for the revelation of the Gentiles, and for the glory of His people Israel. The revelation of the Gentiles, that which was about to follow full soon, would be the effect of the rejection of Christ. The Gentiles, instead of lying hidden as they had been in the Old Testament times, unnoticed in the dealings of God, and instead of being put into a subordinate place to that of Israel, as they will be by and by in the millennium, were, quite distinctly from both, now to come into prominence, as no doubt the glory of the people Israel will follow in that day. Here, indeed, we see the millennial state; But the light to lighten the Gentiles far more fully finds its answer in the remarkable place which the Gentiles enter now by the excision of the Jewish branches of the olive tree. This, I think, is confirmed by what we find afterwards. Simeon does not pretend to bless the child; but when he blesses the parents, he says to Mary, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” It is plain that the Spirit gave him to set forth the Messiah cut off, and the effect of it, “for a sign,” he adds, “that shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” — a word that was accomplished in the feelings to Mary at the cross of the Lord Jesus. But there is more: Christ’s shame acts as a

moral probe, as it is said here- “That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” May I not ask, where could we find such language, except in Luke? Tell me, if you can, any other of the evangelists, whom it would suit for a moment?

Nor is it only to these words I would call your attention, as eminently characteristic of our gospel. Take the mighty grace of God revealed in Christ, on the one hand; on the other, take the dealing with the hearts of men as the result of the cross morally. These are the two main peculiarities which distinguish the writings of Luke. Accordingly also we find that, the note of grace being once struck in the heart of Simeon, as well as of those immediately connected with our Lord Jesus in His birth, it extends itself widely, for joy cannot be stifled or hid. So the good news must flow from one to another, and God takes care that Anna the prophetess should come in; for here we have the revival, not only of angel visits, but of the prophetic Spirit in Israel. “And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age,” and had waited long in faith, but, as ever, was not disappointed. “She was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant,” etc. How good the Lord is in thus ordering circumstances, no less than preparing the heart! “She, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”

Nor is this all the Spirit gives here. The chapter closes with a picture of our Saviour that is admirably consonant to this gospel, and to no other; for what

gospel would it suit to speak of our Lord as a youth? to give us a moral sketch of this wondrous One, now no longer the babe of Bethlehem, but in the lowly company of Mary and Joseph, grown up to the age of twelve years? He is found, according to the order of the law, duly with His parents in Jerusalem for the great feast; but He is there as one to whom the word of God was most precious, and who had more understanding than His teachers. For Him, viewed as man, there was not only the growth of the body, but also development in every other way that became man, always expanding, yet always perfect, as truly man as God. “He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” But there is more than this; for the inspired writer lets us know how He was reproached by His parents, who could but little understand what it was for Him even then to find His meat in doing the will of God. As they journeyed from Jerusalem, missing Him, they return, and find Him in the midst of the doctors. A delicate place it might seem for a youth, but in Him how beautiful was all! and what propriety! “Both hearing them”, it is said, “and asking them questions.” Even the Saviour, though full of divine knowledge, does not take the place now of teaching with authority — never, of course, as the scribes. But even though consciously Son and the Lord God, still was He the child Jesus; and as became One who deigned to be such, in the midst of those older in years, though they knew infinitely less than Himself, there was the sweetest and most comely lowliness. “Both hearing them, and asking them questions.” What grace there was in the questions of Jesus! — what infinite wisdom in the presence of the darkness of these famous teachers! Still, which of these jealous rabbis could discern the smallest departure from

exquisite and absolute propriety? Nor this only; for we are told that “his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The secret thus early comes out. He waited for nothing. He needed no voice from heaven to tell Him that He was the Son of God; He needed no sign of the Holy Ghost descending to assure Him of His glory or mission. These were, no doubt, seen and heard; and it was all right in its season, and important in its place; but I repeat that He needed nothing to impart the consciousness that He was the Son of the Father. He knew it intrinsically, and entirely independent of a revelation from another.

There was, no doubt, that divine gift imparted to Him afterwards, when the Holy Ghost sealed the man Christ Jesus. “Him hath God the Father sealed,” as it is said, and surely quite right. But the notable fact here is, that at this early age, when a youth twelve years old, He has the distinct consciousness that He was the Son, as no one else was or could be. At the same time He returns with His parents, and is as dutiful in obedience to them as if He were only an unblemished child of man — their child. The Son of the Father He was, as really as the Son of man. “He came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” It is the divine person, but the perfect man, perfect in every relation suitable for such a person. Both these truths, therefore, prove themselves to be true, not more in doctrine than in fact.

Then a new scene opens in Luke 3. “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (for men soon pass away, and slight is the trace left by the course of earth’s

great ones), “Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” How strange is this state of things! Not only have we the chief power of the world passed into another hand; not only do we see the Edomite — a political confusion in the land, but a religious Babel too. What a departure from all divine order! Who ever heard of two high priests before? Such were the facts when the manifestation of the Christ drew near, “Annas and Caiaphas being, the high priests.” No changes in the world, nor abasement in the people of the Lord, nor strange conjunction of the priests, nor mapping, out of the land by the stranger, would interfere with the purposes of grace; which, on the contrary, loves to take up men and things at their worst, and shows what God is towards the needy. So John the Baptist goes forth here, not as we traced him in the gospels of Matthew and Mark, but with a special character stamped upon him akin to the design of Luke. “He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Here we see the remarkable largeness of his testimony. “Every valley shall be filled,” he says, “and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.” Such a quotation puts him virtually in connection with the Gentiles, and not merely with the Jew or Jewish purposes. “All flesh,” it is therefore added, “shall see the salvation of God.”

It is evident that the terms intimate the widening of divine grace in its sphere. This is apparent in the

manner in which John the Baptist speaks. When he addresses the multitude, observe how he deals with them. It is not a question now of reproving Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, as in Matthew, but while he here solemnly warns the multitude, the evangelist records his words to each class. They were the same as in the days of the prophets; they were no better after all. Man was far from God: he was a sinner; and, without repentance and faith, what could avail their religious privileges? To what corruption had they not been led through unbelief? “O generation of vipers,” he says, “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.” This, again, accounts for the details of the different classes that come before John the Baptist, and the practical dealing with the duties of each — an important thing, I believe, for us to bear in mind; for God thinks of souls; and whenever we have real moral discipline according to His mind, there is a dealing with men as they are, taking them up in the circumstances of their every-day life. Publicans, soldiers, people — they each hear respectively their own proper word. So in that repentance, which the gospel supposes as its invariable accompaniment, it is of moment to bear in mind that, while all have gone astray, each has also followed his own way.

But, again, we have his testimony to the Messiah. “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he

shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, 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.". And here, too, you will observe an evident and striking illustration of Luke's manner. Having introduced John, he finishes his history before he turns to the subject of the Lord Jesus. Therefore he adds the fact, that "Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him, added yet this above all the evil that he had done, that he shut up John in prison." Hence it is clear that the order of Luke is not here, at any rate, that of historic fact. This is nothing peculiar. Any one who is at all acquainted with historians, either ancient or modern, must know that they do the same thing. It is common and almost inevitable. Not that they all do so, any more than all the evangelists; but still it is the way of many historians, who are reckoned amongst the most exact, not to arrange facts like the mere chroniclers of an annual register, which confessedly is rather a dull, rude way of giving us information. They prefer to group the facts into classes, so as to bring out the latent springs, and the consequences even though unsuspected, and, in short, all they desire of moment in the most distinct and powerful manner. Thus Luke, having introduced John here, does not care to interrupt the subsequent account of our Lord, till the embassy of John's messengers fell into the illustration of another theme. There is no room left for misunderstanding this brief summary of the Baptist's faithful conduct from first to last, and its consequences. So true is this, that he records the baptism of our Lord by John immediately after the

mention that John was put in prison. Chronological sequence here manifestly yields to graver demands.

Next comes the baptism of those who resorted to John, and above all of Christ. “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph,” etc. Now, at first sight, the insertion of a pedigree at this point seems irregular enough; but Scripture is always right, and wisdom is justified of her children. It is the expression of a weighty truth, and in the most fitting, place. The Jewish scene closes. The Lord has been fully shown to the righteous remnant, i.e. what He was to Israel. God’s grace and faithfulness to His promises had presented to them an admirable testimony; and the more so, as it was in the face of the last great or Roman empire. We have had the priest fulfilling his function in the sanctuary; then the angel’s visits to Zechariah, to Mary, and, final]y, to the shepherds. We have had also the great prophetic sign of Immanuel born of the virgin, and now the forerunner, greater than any prophet, John the Baptist, the precursor of the Christ. It was all vain. They were a generation of vipers even as John himself testified about them. Nevertheless, on the part of Christ, there was ineffable grace wherever any heeded the call of John albeit the faintest working of divine life in the soul. The confession of the truth of God against themselves, the acknowledgment that they were sinners, drew the heart of Jesus to them. In Him was no sin, no, not the smallest taint of it, nor connection with it: nevertheless, Jesus was with those who repaired to the baptism of John. It was of God. No necessity of sin brought Him there; but, on the contrary, grace the pure fruit of divine grace in Him. He who had nothing to confess or repent was none

the less the One that was the very expression of the grace of God. He would not be separated from those in whom there was the smallest response to the grace of God. Jesus, therefore does not for the present take people out of Israel, so to speak, any more than from among men severally into association with Himself; He associates Himself with those who were thus owning the reality of their moral condition in the sight of God. He would be with them in that recognition, not of course for Himself, as if He personally needed, but their companion in His grace. Depend upon it, that this same truth connects itself with the whole career of the Lord Jesus. Whatever the changes may have been before or at His death, they only illustrated increasingly this mighty and fruitful principle.

Who, then, was the baptised man on whom, as He prayed, heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost descended, and a voice from heaven said, “Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased”? It was One whom the inspiring Spirit here loves to trace finally up thus: “Which was the Son of Adam, which was the Son of God.” One that was going to be tried as Adam was tried — yea, as Adam never was tried; for it was in no Paradise that this Second Adam was going to meet the tempter, but in the wilderness. It was in the wreck of this world; it was in the scene of death over which God’s judgment hung; it was under such circumstances where it was no question of innocence but of divine power in holiness surrounded by evil, where One who was fully man depended on God, and, where no food, no water was, lived by the word of God. Such, and far far more, was this man Christ Jesus. And hence it is that the genealogy of Jesus seems to me precisely where it ought

to be in Luke, as indeed it must be whether we see it or not. In Matthew its insertion would have been strange and inappropriate had it there come after His baptism. It would have no suitableness there, because what a Jew wanted first of all to know was the birth of Jesus according to the Old Testament prophecies. That was everything, we may say, to the Jew in the first place, to know the Son that was given, and the child that was born, as Isaiah and Micah predicted. Here we see the Lord as a man, and manifesting this perfect grace in man — a total absence of sin; and yet the very One who was found with those who were confessing sin! "The Son of Adam, who was the Son of God." That means, that He was One who, though man, proved that He was God's Son.

Luke 4 is grounded upon this; and here it is not merely after the dispensational style of Matthew that we find the quotation given, but thoroughly in a moral point of view. In the gospel of Matthew, in the first temptation, our Lord owns Himself to be man, living not by mere natural resource, but by the word of God; in the second He confesses and denies not Himself further to be Messiah, the temptation being addressed to Him as in this capacity; the last clearly contemplates the glory of the "Son of man." This I clearly call dispensational. No doubt it was exactly the way in which the temptation occurred. The first temptation was to leave the position of man. This Christ would not do. "Man", He says, "shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is much more important to keep God's word than to live; and, at any rate, the only living He valued was living as man by God's word. This is perfection. Faith holds it for certain

that God knows how to take care of man. It was man's business to keep God's word: God would not fail to watch over and protect him. Satan, therefore, was foiled. Then Satan tempted by a quotation from Psalm 91, which clearly describes the Messiah; assuredly Jesus was not going to deny that. He believed and acted upon it. If He were the Messiah, why not, according to this word, prove God? But the Lord Jesus equally refuted him here, though I need not enter now into the particulars of that which we have already looked at. Then came the last temptation addressed to Him, not as Messiah according to a psalm that refers to it, but rather in His quality of the Son of man about to have all the kingdoms of the world. Here Satan's temptation was, "Why do you not come into their possession and enjoyment now?" Jesus would take them only from God, as the rejected of man, and the sufferer for sin, too; not as the living Messiah here below, as if in a hurry to have the promises fulfilled to Him. In vain was the snare spread in His sight; God alone could give, whoever might actually hold, the kingdoms of the world. The price was too dear to pay, the price of worshipping the devil. Jesus thereon denounces the tempter as Satan.

But this is not what we have in our gospel. Here there is no dispensational order of the temptation suitable to the gospel of Matthew. Such an order, which is here that of the facts also, is exactly according to the design of the Holy Spirit in Matthew. But it suits no other gospel. Mark was not called to furnish more than the record of the temptation, with a graphic touch which reveals its dreary scene, and passes on to the active ministry of our blessed Lord. On the other hand, Luke purposely changes the order — a bold step, in appearance, to take,

and the more if he knew, as I suppose, what was given by the evangelists who preceded him. But it was necessary to his design, and God, I hope to show, puts His own seal upon this deviation from mere time. For, first of all, we have Jesus tried here as man. This must be in every account of the temptation. It is, of course, as man that even the Son of God was tempted of Satan. Here, however, we have, in the second place, the offer of the kingdoms of the world. This, it will be perceived, does not give prominence, like Matthew, to that momentous change of dispensation which ensued on His rejection by the Jew; it does illustrate what the Holy Ghost here puts forward — the temptations rising one above the other in moral weight and import. Such I believe to be the key to the changed order of Luke. The first was a temptation to His personal wants — Hath God said you shall not eat of any thing? Surely you are at liberty to make the stones bread! Faith vindicates God, remains dependent on Him, and is sure of His appearing for us in due time. Then comes the offer of the kingdoms of the world. If a good man wants to do good, what an offer! But Jesus was here to glorify God. Him He would worship, Him only would He serve. Obedience, obeying God's will, worshipping Him — such is the shield against all such overtures of the enemy. Lastly comes the third temptation, through the word of God, on the pinnacle of the temple. This is not the worldly appeal, but one addressed to His spiritual feeling. Need I remark, that a spiritual temptation is to a holy person far subtler and deeper than anything which connected itself with either our wants or our wishes as to the world? Thus there was a personal or bodily, a worldly, and a spiritual temptation. To attain this moral order Luke abandons the sequence of time. Occasionally Matthew, and indeed

no one more than he, deserts the simple order of fact whenever it is required by the Spirit's purpose; but in this case Matthew preserves that order; for it so is that by this means he gives prominence to dispensational truth; while Luke, by arranging the acts of temptation otherwise, brings out their moral bearing in the most admirable and instructive way. Accordingly, from Luke 4:8, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for" disappears in the best authorities. The change of order necessitates the omission. The copyists as often added to Luke what is really the language of Matthew; and even some critics have been so undiscerning as not to detect the imposition. As it stands in the received Greek text and the English version, Satan is told to go, and seems to stand his ground and again tempt the Lord, stultifying His command. But the clause I have named (and not merely the word "for," as Bloomfield imagines) is well known to have no claim to stand, as being destitute of adequate authority. There are good manuscripts that contain the clause, but the weight, for antiquity and character of MSS., and for variety of the old versions, is on the other side, not to speak of the internal evidence, which would be decisive with much inferior external evidence. Hence, too, Satan could hardly be spoken of here as going away like one driven off by indignation, as in Matthew. "And when the devil had ended all the [every] temptation, he departed from him for a season." This lets us into another very material truth, that Satan only went off till another season, when he should return. And this he did for a yet severer character of trial at the end of the Lord's life, the account of which is given us with peculiar elaborateness by Luke; for it is his province above all to show the moral import of the agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus then returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Man was victor over Satan. Unlike the first Adam, the Second Man comes off with energy proved triumphant in obedience. How does He use this power? He repairs to His despised quarters. " And there went out a fame of him to all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up." The fact that follows is mentioned here, and here only, with any detail; whatever allusion there may be to it elsewhere, it is here only we have, by the Spirit of God, this most living and characteristic portrait of our Lord Jesus entering upon His ministry among men according to the purpose and ways of divine grace. Deeds of power are but the skirts of His glory. It is not, as Mark opens it out to us, teaching as nobody ever taught, and then dealing with the unclean spirit before them all. This is not the inauguration we have in Luke, any more than a crowd of miracles, at once the herald and the seal of His doctrine, as in Matthew. Neither is it individual dealing with souls, as in John, who shows Him attracting the hearts of those that were with the Baptist or at their lawful occupations, and calling them to follow Him. Here He goes into the synagogue, as His custom was, and stands up to read.

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias." What a moment! He who is God was become man, and deigns to act as such among men. "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." It is the man Christ Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord was not upon Him as God, but as man, and so anointed Him to preach the gospel to the poor. How thoroughly

suitable to what we have already seen. “He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery 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 you ears.” A real man was there and then the vessel of the grace of God upon the earth, and the Scripture designates this most fully. But where could we find this most apt application of the prophet except in Luke, to whom in point of fact it is peculiar? The entire gospel develops or, at least, accords with it.

“They all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,” but immediately they turn to unbelief, saying, “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.” He had been already at work in what Matthew calls “his city;”, but the Spirit of God here passes over entirely what had been done there. He would thus ensure the fullest lustre to the “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, night be made rich.” This is what we have in Luke. Our Lord then shows the moral root of the difficulty in their minds. “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." Our Lord does not yet call a publican or receive a Gentile, as in Luke 5 and 7; but He tells of the grace of God in that word which they read and heard, but understood not. It was His answer to the incredulity of the Jews, His brethren after the flesh. How solemn are the warnings of grace! It was a Gentile, and not a Jewish widow, who during the days of Israel's apostacy became the marked object of God's mercy. So, too, "many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." At once the hostile rage of the natural man is roused, and his jealousy of divine goodness to the stranger. Those that wondered the moment before at His gracious words are now filled with fury, ready to rend Him. "And they 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 them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power." It is the word that has especial prominence in Luke; and justly so, because the word is the expression of what God is to man, even as it is the word which tries him.

These are the two qualities, therefore, of the gospel: what God is towards man; and what man is, now revealed and proclaimed and brought home by the word of God. Thereby God's grace shines out; thereby, too, the evil of man is morally proved — not merely by the law, but yet more by the word that comes in, and by the person of Christ. Man, however, hates it, and no wonder; for, however full of mercy, it leaves no room for the

pride, the vanity, the self-righteousness, in short, the importance of man in any way. There is one good, even God.

But this is not all the truth; for the power of Satan is active on the earth. It was then too plain, too universal, to be overlooked; and if man was so unbelieving as to the glory of Jesus, Satan at least felt the power. So it was with the man who had an unclean spirit. “He 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? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” Remark here how Jesus, the fulfilment and fulfiller of God’s word, accomplishes law and promise, the prophets and the Psalms. Devils own Him as the Holy One of God and again, we shall see presently, as the Anointed (Christ), the Son of God. In Luke 5 He is seen acting rather as Jehovah. “And Jesus rebuked him, saying hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.” This proves, therefore, that there was in Christ not only grace towards man’s necessities, but power over Satan. He had vanquished Satan, and proceeds to use His power in behalf of man.

He then enters into Simon’s house, and heals his wife’s mother. “Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 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.” Here we coalesce with the earlier gospels. When this attracted the attention of men He departs. Instead of using what people call

“influence”, He will not hear of the people’s desire to retain Him in their midst. He walks in faith, the Holy One of God, content with nothing that made man an object to obscure His glory. If followed into a desert place, away from the crowd that admired Him, He lets them know that He must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore was He sent. “And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.”

And now we have, in the beginning, of the fifth chapter, a fact taken entirely out of its historical place. It is the call of the earlier apostles, more particularly of Simon, who is singled out, just as we have seen one blind man, or one demoniac, brought into relief, even though there might be more. So the son of Jonas is the great object of the Lord’s grace here, although others were called at the same time. There were companions of his leaving all for Christ; but we have his case, not theirs, dealt with in detail. Now, from elsewhere, we know that this call of Peter preceded the Lord’s entrance into Simon’s house, and the healing of Simon’s wife’s mother. We also know that John’s gospel has preserved for us the first occasion when Simon ever saw the Lord Jesus, as Mark’s gospel shows when it was that Simon was called away from his ship and occupation. Luke had given us the Lord’s grace with and towards man, from the synagogue at Nazareth down to His preaching everywhere in Galilee, casting out devils, and healing diseases by the way. This is essentially a display in Him of the power of God by the word, and this over Satan and all the afflictions of men. A complete picture of all this is given first; and in order to leave it unbroken, the particulars of Simon’s call are left out of its time. But as the way of the Lord on that occasion was of the deepest value as well as interest to

be given, it was reserved for this place. This illustrates the method of classifying facts morally, instead of merely recording them as they came to pass, which is characteristic of Luke.

“It came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and he 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 be 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, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” It is plain that the word of Jesus was the first great trial. Simon had already and long, toiled; but the word of Jesus is enough. “And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” Next, we have the moral effect. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus, knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” It was the most natural thing possible for a soul arrested, not merely by the mighty deed which the Lord had wrought, but by such a proof that His word could be trusted implicitly — that divine power answered to the word of the man Christ Jesus. His sinfulness glared on his conscience. Christ’s word let the light of God into his soul: “Depart from me; for I am a

sinful man.” There was real sense of sin and confession; yet the attitude of Peter at the feet of Jesus shows that nothing was farther from his heart than that the Lord should leave him, though his conscience felt that so it ought to be. He was convicted more deeply of his sinful state than he had ever been before. Already a real attraction had knit Simon’s heart to Christ. He was born of God, as far as we can judge, before this. He had really for some while known and heard the voice of Jesus. This was not the first time, as John gives us to see. But now the word so penetrated and searched him out, that this utterance was the feeling of his soul — an apparent contradiction to draw near to the feet of Jesus, saying, Depart from me, but not in the root of things — an inconsistency only on the surface of his words; for his innermost feeling, was one of desire after and delight in Jesus, clinging to Him with all his soul, but with the strongest conviction that he had not the slightest claim to be there — that he could even pronounce condemnation on himself otherwise in a certain sense, though quite contrary to all his wishes. The more he saw what Jesus was, the less fit company he felt himself to be for such an One as He. This is precisely what grace does produce in its earlier workings. I say not, in its earliest, but in its earlier workings; for we must not be in too great a hurry with the ways of God in the soul. Astonished at this miracle, Peter thus speaks to the Lord; but the gracious answer sets him at ease. “Fear not,” says Christ; “from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” My object in referring to the passage is for the purpose of pointing out the moral force of our Gospel. It was a divine person who, if He displayed the knowledge and power of God, revealed Himself in grace, but also morally to the conscience, though it cast out fear.

Then follows the cure of the leper, and subsequently the forgiveness of the palsied man: again the exhibition that Jehovah was there, and fulfilling the Spirit of Ps. 103; but He was the Son of man too. Such was the mystery of His person present in grace, which was proved by the power of God in one wholly dependent on God. Finally, there is the call of Levi the publican; the Lord showing, also, how well aware He was of the effect on man of introducing among those accustomed to law the reality of grace. In truth, it is impossible to mingle the new wine of grace with the old bottles of human ordinances. The Lord adds what is found in no gospel but Luke's, that man prefers, in presence of the new thing from God, the old religious feelings, thoughts, ways, doctrines, habits, and customs. "No man", He says, "having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better." Man prefers the dealing of law with all its dimness, uncertainty, and distance from God, to that divine grace infinitely more blessed, which in Christ displays God to man, and brings man, by the blood of His cross, to God.

In Luke 6 this is followed up. We see the Lord on the two Sabbath days: the defence of the disciples for plucking the ears of corn, and the well-nigh defiant cure of the withered hand in the synagogue. The Lord does not pluck the ears of corn Himself; but He defends the guiltless, and this on moral ground. We do not here meet with the particulars set forth dispensationally as in Matthew's gospel: though the reference is to the same facts, they are not so reasoned upon. There the subject is much more the approaching change of economy: here it is more moral. A similar remark applies to the ease of healing the withered hand. The Sabbath, or seal of the

old covenant, was never given of God, thou, abused by man, to hinder His goodness to the needy and wretched. But the Son of man was Lord of the Sabbath: and grace is free to bless man and glorify God. Immediately after this, clouds gather over the devoted head of our Lord; “They were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.”

The Lord retires to a mountain, continuing all night in prayer to God. On the next day, out of the disciples He chooses twelve who were pre-eminently to represent Him after His departure. That is, He nominates the twelve apostles. At the same time He delivers what is commonly called the sermon on the mount. But there are striking differences between the manner of Luke and Matthew, in conveying that sermon to us; for Luke brings two contrasts together; one of which was dropped by Matthew — at any rate in this, the beginning of his gospel. Luke couples the blessings and the woes; Matthew reserves his woes for another occasion, for that one would affirm that the Lord did not proclaim the woes of Matt. 13 on another and later occasion; but it may be safely said, that the first evangelist passed by all questions of woes for the discourse on the mount. Luke, on the contrary, furnishes both. Who can fail to recognize in this circumstance a striking mark; both of the evangelists, and of the special designs of Him who inspired them? Luke does not confine himself to the bright side, but adds also the solemn. There is a warning for conscience, as much as there is grace which appeals to the heart It is Luke that gives it and most gloriously. Besides, there is another difference. Matthew presents Christ alone as the lawgiver. No doubt greater than Moses He was; He was Jehovah, Emmanuel. Therefore

He takes the place of deepening, enlarging, and ever bringing in principles so infinitely better as to eclipse what was said to them of old. Thus, while the authority of the law and prophets is maintained, there is now an incalculable change, in advance of all before, suitably to the presence of His glory who then spoke, and to the revelation of the Father's name More even was yet to be; but this was reserved for the presence in power of the Holy Ghost, as we are told in John 16.

Here, in the gospel of Luke, another course is pursued. It is not as One who lays down principles or describes the classes that can have part in the kingdom, as "Blessed the poor" etc.: but the Lord views, and speaks to, His disciples, as those immediately concerned; "Blessed ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." It is all personal, in view of the godly company that then surrounded Him. So He says, "Blessed ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed ye that weep now"' etc. It was sorrow and suffering now; for He who fulfilled the promises, and psalms, and prophets was rejected; and the kingdom could not yet come in power and glory. "He must first suffer many things."

Thus all through it is not description alone, but a direct address to the heart In Matthew it was most appropriately a general discourse. Here it is made immediately applicable. That is, He looks at the persons then before Him, and pronounces a blessing upon them distinctly and personally.

For that reason, as also for others, He says nothing about suffering for righteousness' sake here In Matthew there are the two characters — those blessed when persecuted for righteousness' sake, and yet more those

who were persecuted for His name's sake. Luke omits the righteousness: all persecution here noticed is on account of the Son of man. How blessed it is in Luke to find that the great witness of grace acts Himself in the spirit of that grace, and makes this to be the one distinguishing feature. Both sufferers are surely blessed; each is in his own season precious; but the least portion is not that which characterizes the word of the Lord in his gospel who has mainly in view us who were poor sinners of the Gentiles.

In Luke the points pressed are not detailed contrasts with the law, nor the value of righteousness in secret with the Father, nor trust in His loving care without anxiety, but practical grace in loving our enemies, merciful as our Father is merciful, and so children of the Highest, with the assurance of corresponding recompence. Then comes the warning parable of the blindness of the religious world's leaders and the value of personal reality and obedience, instead of moralising for others, which would end in ruin. In the chapter that follows (Luke 7) we shall see the Lord still more evidently proving that grace cannot be tied to Jewish limits, that His was a power which the Gentile owns to be absolute over all — yea, over death as well as nature.

But before we pass on, let me observe that there is another feature also that strikes us in Luke, though it does not call for many words now. It appears that various portions of the sermon on the mount were reserved for insertion here and there, where they would it in best for comment on or connection with facts. The reason is, that moral grouping of conversations which has been already shown to be according to the method of Luke. Here there is not at all the same kind of formal

order of discourse as in Matthew. There were, I doubt not, questions asked during its course; and the Holy Ghost has been pleased to give us specimens of this in the gospel of Luke. I may show on another occasion, that this which occurs not infrequently throughout the whole central part of Luke is found in him only. It is for the most part made up of this association of facts, with remarks either growing out of what has occurred, or suitable to them, and therefore transplanted from elsewhere.

In chapter 7 the healing of the centurion's servant is recounted, with very striking differences from the form in which he had it in Matthew. Here we are told that the centurion, when he heard of Jesus, sent unto Him the elders of the Jews. The man who does not understand the design of the gospel, and has only heard that Luke wrote especially for the Gentiles, is at once arrested by this. He objects to the hypothesis that this fact is irreconcilable with a Gentile bearing, and is, on the contrary, rather in favour of a Jewish aim, at least here; because in Matthew you find nothing about the embassy of the Jews, while here it is in Luke. His conclusion is, that one gospel is as much Jewish or Gentile as another, and that the notion of special design is baseless. All this may sound plausible to a superficial reader; but in truth the twofold fact, when duly stated, remarkably confirms the different scope of the gospels, instead of neutralizing it; for the centurion in Luke was led, both being Gentiles, to honour the Jews in the special place God has put them in. He therefore sets a value on this embassy to the Jews. The precise contrast of this we have in Romans 11, where the Gentiles are warned against high-mindedness and conceit. It was because of Jewish

unbelief, no doubt, that certain branches were broken off; but the Gentiles were to see that they abode in God's goodness, not falling into similar and worse evil, or else they also should be cut off. This was most wholesome admonition from the apostle of the uncircumcision to the saints in the great capital of the Gentile world. Here the Gentile centurion shows both his faith and his humility by manifesting the place which God's people had in his eyes. He did not arrogantly talk of looking only to God.

Allow me to say, brethren, that this is a principle of no small value, and in more ways than one. There is often a good deal of unbelief — not open, of course, but covert — which cloaks itself under the profession of superior and sole dependence on God, and boasts itself aloud of its leaving any and every man out of account. Nor do I deny that there are, and ought to be, cases where God alone must act, convince, and satisfy. But the other side is true also; and this is precisely what we see in the case of the centurion. There was no proud panacea of having to do only with God, and not man. On the contrary, he shows, by his appeal to and use of the Jewish elders, how truly he bowed to the ways and will of God. For God had a people, and the Gentile owned the people as of His choice, spite of their unworthiness; and if he wanted the blessing for his servant, he would send for the elders of the Jews that they might plead for him with Jesus. To me there seems far more of faith, and of the lowliness which faith produces, than if he had gone personally and alone. The secret of his action was, that he was a man not only of faith, but of faith-wrought humility; and this is a most precious fruit, wherever it grows and blooms. Certainly the good Gentile centurion sends his ambassadors of Israel, who go and tell what was most true and proper

(yet I can hardly think it what the centurion ever put in their mouth). “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, and he hath built us a synagogue.” He was a godly man; and it was no new thing, this love for the Jews, and the practical proof of it.

It will be observed, again, that Matthew has not a word about this fact; and cannot but feel how blessed is the omission there. Had Matthew been writing merely as a man for the Jews, it was just the thing he would have surely fastened on; but the inspiring power of the Spirit wrought, and grace, I do not doubt, also, in Matthew as well as in Luke, and thus only have we the fruit now apparent in their accounts. It was fitting that the evangelist for the Jews should both leave out the (Gentile’s strong expression of respect for Israel, and dwell upon the warning to the proud children of the kingdom. Equally fitting was it that Luke, in writing for Gentile instruction, should especially let us see the love and esteem for God’s sake which a godly Gentile had for the Jews. Here was no scorn for their low estate, but so much the more compassion; yea, more than compassion, for his desire after their mediation proved the reality of his respect for the chosen nation. It was not a new feeling; he had long low loved them, and built them a synagogue in days when he sought nothing at their hands; and they remember it now. The faith of this Gentile was such, that the Lord avows He had not seen the like in Israel. Not only does Matthew report this — a weighty admonition even for the believers of Israel — but also Luke, for the encouragement of the Gentiles. This common point was most worthy of record, and

attached to the new creation, not to the old. How beautiful the scene is in both gospels' how much is that beauty increased when we more closely inspect the wisdom and grace of God shown out in Matthew's presentation of Gentile blessing and Jewish warning for the Israelites; and withal, in Luke's presentation of respect for the Jews, and the absence here of all notice of Jewish excision, which might so easily be perverted to Gentile self-complacency!

The next scene (verses 11-17) is peculiar to Luke. The Lord not only heals, but with a grace and majesty altogether proper to Himself, brings in life for the dead, yet with remarkable consideration for human woe and affection. Not only did He, in His own quickening power, cause the dead to live, but He sees in him, whom they were even then carrying out to burial, the only son of his widowed mother; and so He stays the bier, bids the deceased to arise, and delivers him to his mother. No sketch can be conceived more consonant with the spirit and aim of our gospel.

Then we have the disciples of John introduced, for the special purpose of noting the great crisis that was at hand, if not come. So severe was the shock to antecedent feeling and expectation, that even the very forerunner of the Messiah was himself shaken and offended, it would seem, because the Messiah did not use His power on behalf of Himself and His own followers — did not protect every godly soul in the land — did not shed around light and liberty for Israel far and wide. Yet who could gainsay the character of what was being done? A Gentile had confessed the supremacy of Jesus over all things: disease must obey Him absent or present! If not the working of God's own gracious power,

what could it be? After all, John the Baptist was a man; and what is he to be accounted of? What a lesson, and how much needed at all times. The Lord Jesus not only answers with His wonted dignity, but at the same time with the grace that could not but yearn over the questioning and stumbled mind of His forerunner — no doubt meeting, too, the unbelief of John's followers; for there need be little doubt, that if there was weakness in John, there was far more in his disciples.

Thereupon our Lord introduces His own moral judgment of the whole generation. At the close of this is the most remarkable exemplification of divine wisdom conferred by grace where one might least look for it, in contrast with the perverse folly of those who thought themselves wise. "But wisdom is justified of all her children," no matter who or what they may have been, as surely as it will be justified in the condemnation of all who have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Indeed, the evil side as well as the good are almost equally salient at the house of Simon the Pharisee; and the Holy Ghost led Luke to furnish here the most striking possible commentary on the folly of self-righteousness, and the wisdom of faith. He adduces exactly a case in point. The worth of man's wisdom appears in the Pharisee, as the true wisdom of God, which comes down from above, appears where His own grace alone created it; for what depositary seemed more remote than a woman of ruined and depraved character? yea, a sinner whose very name God withholds? On the other hand, this silence, to my mind, is an evidence of His wonderful grace. If no worthy end could be reached by publishing the name of her who was but too notorious in that city of old, it was no less worthy of God that He should make manifest in

her the riches of His grace. Again, another thing: not only is grace best proved where there is most need of it, but its transforming power appears to the greatest advantage in the grossest and most hopeless cases.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” Such is the operation of grace, a new creating, no mere change or bettering of the old man according to Christ, but a real life with a new character altogether. See it in this woman, who was the object of grace. It was to the house of the Pharisee who had invited Jesus that this woman repaired — attracted by the Saviour’s grace, and truly penitent, full of love to His person, but not yet with the knowledge of her sins forgiven; for this was what she needed, and what He meant her to have and know. It is not the exhibition of a soul starting upon the knowledge of forgiveness, but the ways of grace leading one into it.

What drew her heart was not the acceptance of the gospel message, nor the knowledge of the believer’s privilege That was what Christ was about to give; but what won her, and drew her so powerfully even to that Pharisee’s house, was something deeper than any acquaintance with conferred blessings: it was the grace of God in Christ Himself. She felt instinctively that in Him was not more truly all that purity and love of God Himself, than the mercy she needed for herself. The predominant feeling in her soul, what riveted her was, that, spite of the sense she had of her sins, she was sure she might cast herself on that boundless grace she saw in the Lord Jesus. Hence she could not stay away from the house where He was, though she well knew she was the last person in the town the master of it would welcome there. What excuse could she make? Nay, that sort of thing was over now; she was in the truth. What

business, then, had she in Simon's house? Yes, her business was with Jesus, the Lord of glory for eternity, albeit there; and so complete was the mastery of His grace over her soul, that nothing could keep her back. Without asking for Simon's leave, without a Peter or a John to introduce her, she goes where Jesus was, taking with her an alabaster box of ointment, "and stood at his feet behind him 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."

This drew out the religious reasoning, of Simon's heart, which, like all other reasoning of the natural mind on divine things, is only infidelity. "He spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet." How hollow the fair-looking Pharisee was! He had asked the Lord there; but what was the value of the Lord in Simon's eyes? "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." Indeed, she was a sinner. This was not wrong but that. The root of the worst wrong is just that depreciation of Jesus. Simon within himself doubted that He was even a prophet. Oh, how little thought he that it was God Himself in the person of that lowly man, the Son of the Highest! Herein was the starting-point of this most fatal error. Jesus, however, proves that He was a prophet, yea, the God of the prophets; and reading the thoughts of his heart, He answers his unuttered question by the parable of the two debtors.

I will not dwell now on that which is familiar to all. Suffice it to say, that this is a scene peculiar to our gospel. Might I not ask, where possibly could it be found harmoniously except here? How admirable the choice of

the Holy Ghost, thus shown in displaying Jesus according, to all we have seen from the beginning of this gospel! The Lord here pronounces her sins to be forgiven; but it is well to observe, that this was at the close of the interview, and not the occasion of it. There is no ground to suppose that she knew that her sins were forgiven before. On the contrary, the point of the story appears to me lost where this is assumed. What confidence His grace gives the one that goes straight to Himself! He speaks authoritatively, and warrants forgiveness. Till Jesus said so, it would have been presumption for any soul at this time to have acted upon the certainty that his sins were forgiven. Such seems to me the express object of this history — a poor sinner truly repenting, and attracted by His grace, which draws her to Himself, and hears from Him His own direct word, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Her sins, which were many, were forgiven. There was no hiding, therefore, the extent of her need; for she loved much. Not that I would explain this away. Her loving much was true before, as well as after, she heard the forgiveness. There was real love in her heart already. She was transported by the divine grace in His person, which inspired her by the Spirit’s teaching with love through His love; but the effect of knowing from His own lips that her sins were forgiven must have been to increase that love. The Lord is here before us as One that thoroughly sounded the evil heart of unbelief, that appreciated, as truly as He had effected, the work of grace in the believer’s heart, and speaks out before all the answer of peace with which He entitled such an one to depart.

In the last chapter (Luke 8) on which I am to speak tonight, the Lord is seen not only going forth now to

preach, but with a number of men and women in His train, children of wisdom surely, the poor but real witnesses of His own rich grace, and thus devoted to Him here below. “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, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.” Here, too, is it not a wonderfully characteristic picture of our Lord Jesus, and so only found in Luke? Entirely above the evil of men, He could and did walk in the perfect calm of His Father’s presence, but withal according to the activity, in this world, of God’s grace.

Hence, He is here presented in our gospel as speaking of the sower, even as He was then scattering the seed of “the word of God;” for so it is called here. In the gospel of Matthew, where the same parable appears as introducing the kingdom of heaven, it is called “the word of the kingdom.” Here, when the parable is explained, the seed is “the word of God.” Thus it is not a question of the kingdom in Luke; in Matthew it is. Nothing can be more simple than the reason of the difference. Remark that the Spirit of God in recording does not limit Himself to the bare words that Jesus spoke. This I hold to be a matter of no little importance in forming a sound judgment of the Scriptures. The notion to which orthodox men sometimes shut themselves up, in zeal for plenary inspiration, is, to my mind, altogether mechanical: they think that inspiration necessarily and only gives the exact words that Christ uttered. There seems to me not the slightest necessity for this. Assuredly the Holy Spirit gives the truth, the whole

truth, and nothing but the truth. The differences are owing to no infirmity, but to His design; and what He has given us is incomparably better than a bare report by so many hands, all meaning to give the same words and facts. Take the chapter before us to illustrate what I mean. Matthew and Luke alike give us the same parable of the sower; but Matthew calls it “the word of the kingdom;” while Luke calls it “the word of God.” The Lord Jesus may have employed both in His discourse at this time. I am not contending that He did not; but what I affirm is, that, whether He did or did not employ both, the Spirit of God did not give us to have both in the same gospel, but acts with divine sovereignty. He does not lower the evangelists into mere literal reporters, such as may be found by dint of skill among men. No doubt their object is to get the precise words which a man utters, because there is no such power or person to effect the will of God in the world. But the Spirit of God can act with more freedom, and can drive this part of the utterance to one evangelist, and that part to another. Hence, then, the mere mechanical system can never explain inspiration. It finds itself entirely baffled by the fact that the same words are not given in all the gospels. Take Matthew, as we have just seen, sating, “Blessed are the poor,” and Luke, saying, “Blessed are ye poor.” This is at once an embarrassing difficulty for the mechanical scheme of inspiration; it is none at all for those who hold to the Holy Ghost’s supremacy in employing different men as the vessels of its various objects. There is no attempt in any of the gospels to furnish a reproduction of all the words and works of the Lord Jesus. I have no doubt, therefore, that although in each gospel we have nothing but the truth, we have not all the facts in any Gospel, or in all of them. Hence, the richest fulness

results from the method of the Spirit. Having the absolute command of all truth, He just gives the needed word in the right place, and by the due person, so as the better to display the Lord's glory.

After this parable we have another, like Matthew's, but not relating to the kingdom, because this is not the point here; for dispensation is not the topic before us as in Matthew. Indeed, this parable is one not found in Matthew at all. What Matthew gives is complete for the purposes of his gospel. But in Luke it was of great importance to give this parable; for when a man has been laid hold of by the word of God, the next thing is testimony. The disciples, not the nation, were given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Enlightened themselves, the next thing was to give light to others. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." Thus responsibility in the use of light is enforced.

What follows here is the slight of natural ties in divine things, the approval of nothing but a relationship founded on the word of God heard and done. Flesh is valueless; it profits nothing. So when people said unto Him, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee; he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." Still it is the word of God. It is not as Matthew puts it after the formal giving up the

nation to apostacy and a new relationship brought in; here it is simply God's approval of those who keep and value His word. The place that the word of God has morally meets the mind of Christ.

But Christ does not exempt His witnesses from troubles here below. The next is the scene on the lake, and the disciples manifesting their unbelief and the Lord His grace and power. Passing, to the other side me see Legion who spite of this awful evil has a deep divine work wrought in his soul. It is not so much a question of making him a servant of God. That we have in Mark and much detailed. Here we have Him rather as a man of God; first the object of the delivering power and favour of the Lord; then, delighting in Him who thus made God known to him. No wonder when the devils were cast out the man besought that he might be with Jesus. It was a feeling natural so to speak, to grace and to the new relationship with God into which he had entered. "But Jesus sent him away saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way and published throughout the whole city how great thing's Jesus had done unto him."

The account of Jairus's appeal for his daughter follows. While the Lord is on His way to heal the daughter of Israel, who meanwhile dies He is interrupted by the touch of faith; for whoever went to Him found healing. The Lord however while He perfectly meets the case of any needy soul at the present time does not fail in the long run to accomplish the purposes of God for the revival of Israel. He will restore Israel; for in God's mind they are not dead but sleep.

Luke 9 - 24.

The ninth chapter opens with the mission — not the setting apart, but the circuit — of the twelve sent out by the Lord, who therein was working after a fresh sort. He communicates power in grace to men, chosen men, who have to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick; for in this Gospel, although it be at first in Israel, it is the working of divine grace that is evidently destined for an incomparably larger sphere and yet deeper objects. This mission of the twelve in the Gospel of Matthew has a decidedly Jewish aspect, even to the very end, and contemplates the messengers of the kingdom occupied with their work till the Son of man come, and therefore entirely leaves out what God is now doing in the call of the Gentiles. Here we have clearly the same mission presented in a wholly different point of view. What is peculiarly Jewish, though all was then to the Jew, disappears; what makes known God, and this, too, in mercy and goodness towards needy man — this we have fully in our Gospel. It is said here, “Preach the kingdom of God.” Instead of leaving man to himself, the intervention of divine power is the central thought of God’s kingdom; and instead of man being left to his resources and wisdom to take and keep the upper hand in the world by the providence of God, as if he had a certain vested right in the realm of nature, God will Himself take up this scene for the purpose of introducing His own power and goodness into it in the person of Christ, the Church being thus associated, and man thus exalted truly, and blessed more than ever. This will be displayed in what we commonly call the millennium. But meanwhile the twelve were to go out as Christ’s messengers; for God always gives a testimony

before He brings in the thing that is testified of. Attached to this apostolate was power over all demons, and the cure of diseases. But this was only accessory. The chief and evident aim was no display of deeds, though He did arm the messengers of the kingdom with such energy as that the powers of Satan should be defied, as it were, though this is more detailed in Matthew. Not, of course, that there is silence here as to the miraculous powers of healing. But we do not find in Luke the especial details of Jewish appeal up to the end of the age, nor the vacuum as to intermediate dealings with Gentiles. What the Holy Ghost singles out and brings into prominence here is all that manifests the goodness and compassion of God towards man in both soul and body.

We have along with this the solemnity of refusing, the testimony of Christ. Indeed, this is true even of the gospel now, where it is not merely the kingdom preached, but the grace of God; and, in my opinion, it is an accompaniment of the gospel that never can be severed from it without loss. To preach love alone is defective. Love is essential to the gospel, which assuredly is the very brightest manifestation of God's grace to man in Christ; for it is a message of love which not only gave the only begotten Son of God, but dealt with Him unsparingly on the cross in order to save sinners. To preach love alone is another and serious thing, a different gospel which is not another. Yea, to keep back the awful and ruinous consequences of indifference to the gospel, I do not mean absolutely rejecting it, but even making light of the gospel, is fatal. Never is it real love to keep back or hide that man is already lost and must be cast into hell, unless he be

saved through believing the gospel. To occupy men with other things, however seemingly or really good in their place, is no proof of love to man, but insensibility to the grace of God, the glory of God, the evil of sin, the truest deepest need of man, the sureness of judgment, the blessedness of the gospel. This neglected, God in vain is otherwise shown out in His goodness. To return, however, we see that in this part of our Gospel the Lord is testifying to the Jews in view of His rejection, the disciples being invested with the powers of the world to come.

Then we have the working of conscience shown out in a bad man. Herod even, far removed as he was from such a testimony, still was so far moved by it as to enquire what it all meant, and whose power it was that thus wrought. He had known John the Baptist as a great personage, who struck the attention of all Israel in his day. But John was gone. Herod had good reason to know how it was an evil conscience that troubled him, particularly as he heard what was going on now, when men pretended, among various rumours, that John was risen from the dead. This did not satisfy Herod; he had no sense of the power of God, but, at least, he was disturbed and perplexed.

The apostles tell the Lord on their return what they had done, and He takes them into a desert place, where, on their failure to enter into the character of Christ, He displays Himself as not only a man who was the Son of God, but as God, Jehovah Himself. There is no Gospel where the Lord Jesus does not show Himself thus. He may have other objects, He may not always manifest Himself in the same elevation; but there is no gospel that does not present the Lord Jesus as the God of Israel

upon earth. And hence this is a miracle found in all the Gospels. Even John, who ordinarily does not give the same sort of miracles as the others, presents this miracle along with the other evangelists. Hence, it is plain, that God was showing His presence in beneficence to His people on the earth. The very character of the miracle speaks it. He who once rained the manna is here; once more He feeds His poor with bread. It was the Jew particularly, but still the poor and despised, who were like sheep ready to perish in the wilderness. Thus we find that, while it is perfectly in harmony with the character of Luke, it nevertheless comes within the range of all the Gospels, some for one reason and some for another.

Matthew was given, I suppose, to illustrate the great dispensational change then imminent; because Christ is there shown us as dismissing the multitude, and going to pray on high, while the disciples toil on the troubled sea. There was no real faith in the poor Jews; they only wanted Jesus for what He could give them, not for His own sake. Whereas faith receives God in Jesus; faith sees the supreme glory of a rejected Jesus: no matter what the outward circumstances may be, still it owns Him; the multitude did not. They would have liked such a Messiah as their eyes saw in His power and beneficence; they would have liked such an One to provide and fight their battles for them; but there was no sense of God’s glory in His person. The consequence is, the Lord, though He feeds them, goes away; the disciples are meanwhile exposed to toil and tempest, and the Lord Jesus rejoins them, calling out the energy of one who symbolises the bolder ones in the last days. For even the godly remnant in Israel will not then have

precisely the same measure of faith. Peter appears to represent the more advanced, going forth out of the ship to meet the Lord, but like him, no doubt, ready to perish for their boldness. Although there was the work of affection, and so far of confidence, to abandon all for Jesus, still Peter was occupied with the troubles, as they undoubtedly will be in that day. As for him, so for them will the Lord mercifully interpose. Thus it is evident that Matthew has in view the complete change that has taken place: the Lord gone away and taking another character altogether above, and then rejoining His people, working in their hearts, and delivering them in the last days. Of this we have nothing in M Mark or Luke. The scope of neither admitted of such a sketch of circumstances as could become a type of the events of the last days in connection with Israel, any more than of the present separation of the Lord to be a Priest on high, before He returns to the earth and especially to Israel. We can easily understand how perfectly all this suits Matthew.

But again, in John 6, the miracle furnished the occasion for the wonderful discourse of our Saviour, occupying the latter part of the chapter, which will be touched on another occasion. At present my point is simply to show, that while we have it in all, the setting, so to speak, of the jewel differs, and that particular phase is brought out which suits the object of God’s Spirit in each Gospel.

After this, as indeed is found everywhere, our Lord calls out the disciples more distinctly into a separate place. He had shown what He was, and all the blessings reserved for Israel, but there was no real faith in the people. There was, to a certain extent, a sense of need; there was willingness enough to receive what was for

the body and the present life, but there their desires stop; and the Lord proved this by His questions, because these revealed the agitation of men's minds, and their want of faith. Hence, therefore, the reply of the disciples to the Lord's question, "Whom say the people that I am? They answering, said, John the Baptist; but some say Elias; and others say that one of the old prophets is risen again." Whether it were Herod and his servants, or Christ with the disciples, the same tale meets the ear of varying uncertainty but constant unbelief.

But now we find a change. In that little group which surrounded the Lord, there were hearts to whom God had unveiled the glory of Christ; and Christ loved to hear the declaration, not for His own sake, but for God's, and for theirs too. In divine love He heard their confession of His person. No doubt it was His due; but in truth His love desired rather to give than to get, to seal the blessing that had been already given of God, and to pronounce a fresh blessing. What a moment in God's eyes! Jesus "said unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" Peter then answers, unequivocally, "The Christ of God." At first sight it might seem remarkable that, in the Jewish Gospel of Matthew, we have a far fuller acknowledgment. There he owns Him not only to be the Christ, but the "Son of the living God." This is left out here. Along with the acknowledgment of that deeper glory of Christ's person, the Lord is reported as saying, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." As the expression of the divine dignity of Christ is left out here, so the building the Church is not found. There is only the acknowledgment of Christ as the true Messiah, the anointed of God; not one anointed by human hands, but the Christ of God. The Lord, therefore, entirely omits all

intimation of the Church, that new thing which was going to be builded, just as we have here the omission of Peter's brightest confession. "And He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing." It was no use to proclaim Him as the Messiah. After prophecies, miracles, preaching, the people had been altogether at fault. As the disciples themselves told the Lord, some said one thing, some said another, and no matter what they said, it was all wrong. No doubt there was this handful of disciples who followed Him; and Peter, speaking for the rest, knows and confesses the truth. But it was in vain for the people, as a whole; and this was the question for the Messiah, as such. The Lord accordingly, at this point of time, introduces that most solemn change, not dispensational, not the cutting off of the Jewish system, and the Church building coming into view. That, we have seen, comes in the Gospel where we have ever found the question of dispensational crisis discussed. In Luke it is not so; for there is found the great moral root of the matter; and after such a full — I would not say adequate, but abundant testimony had been rendered to Christ, not merely by His intrinsic energy, but even by communicated power to His servants, it was altogether in vain to proclaim Him any longer as the Messiah of Israel. The manner in which He had come as Messiah was foreign to their thoughts, their feelings, their preconceptions, their prepossessions; the lowliness, the grace, the path of suffering and contempt — all this was so hateful to Israel, that such a Messiah, though He were the Christ of God, they would have nothing to do with. They wanted a Messiah to gratify their national ambition, and to meet their natural wants. Earthly glory, as a present thing too, they desired, being simply men of the world;

and whatever struck a blow at this, whatever brought in God and His ways, His goodness, His grace, His necessary judgment of sin, His introduction of that for faith now, which would, and alone could, stand throughout eternity, was abhorrent to them. Of all this they had no sense of want, and One who came for these ends was altogether odious to them. Hence, then, our Lord acts upon this at once, and announces the grand truth that it was no longer a question of the Christ accomplishing what had been promised to the fathers, and which, no doubt, would yet be made good to the children in another day. Meanwhile He was going to take the place of a rejected, suffering man — the Son of man; not only One whose person was despised, but who was going to the cross: His testimony thoroughly discredited, and Himself to die. This, then, He first announced. “The Son of man,” says He, “must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes (it is not here the Gentiles, but the Jews), and be slain, and be raised the third day.” On that, I need not say, hangs not merely the glorious building of the Church of God, but the ground on which any sinful soul can be brought to God. But here it is presented, not in the view of atonement, but as the rejection and suffering of the Son of man at the hands of His own people, that is, of their leaders.

One must carefully remember that the death of Christ, infinite in value, accomplishes many and most worthy ends. To reduce ourselves to a single particular view of Christ’s death, is no better than voluntary poverty in the presence of the inexhaustible riches of the grace of God. The sight of other objects met there does not in the least degree detract from the all-importance of atonement. I

can perfectly understand, that when a soul is not thoroughly free and happy in peace, the one thing desired is that which will set such an one at ease. Hence, even among saints, the tendency to shut oneself up to the atonement. The looking for nothing else in the death of Christ is the proof that the soul is not satisfied — that there is still a void in the heart, which craves what has not yet been found. Hence, therefore, persons who are more or less under the law restrict the cross of Christ only to expiation, i.e., the means of pardon. When it is a question of righteousness, so thoroughly d Mark are they, that anything beyond the remission of sins they must look somewhere else for. What is it to them that the Son of man was glorified, or God glorified in Him? In every respect, save that there is a place left for atonement in the mercy of God, the system is false.

Our Saviour speaks not as putting away man's guilt, but as rejected and suffering to the utmost because of man's or Israel's unbelief. It is here not a revelation of the efficacious sacrifice on God's part. The heads of earthly religion kill Him; but He is raised the third day. Then comes in, not a development of the blessed results of the atonement, however surely this was what God was going to effect at that very time; but Luke, as his manner is, insists, in connection with Christ's rejection and death, on the great moral principle: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." The Lord will have the cross true, not only for a man, but to him too. Blessed as it is to know what God has wrought in the cross of Christ for us, we must learn what it writes on the world and human nature. And that is what our Lord presses: "If any man will come after me, let him deny Himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever

will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." We have here a remarkable fulness of glory spoken of in connection with that great day when eternal things begin to be displayed.

"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." Here, therefore, as in the first three Gospels, we have the scene of the transfiguration. The only difference is, that in Luke's Gospel it appears to come a great deal earlier than in the others. In Matthew's case there is the waiting, as it were, till the last. I need not say that the Spirit of God had the exact point of time just as clearly before His mind in one as in another; but the ruling, object necessarily brought in other topics in one Gospel, as it put them aside in another. In a word, the point in Matthew was to show the fulness of testimony before that which was so fatal for Israel. God, I may say, exhausted every means of warning and testimony to His ancient people, giving them proof upon proof, all spread out before them. Luke, on the contrary, brings in a special picture of His grace "to the Jew first" at an early time; and then, that rejected, turns to larger principles, because in point of fact, what ever might be the means through the responsibility of man, it was all a settled thing with God.

John does not introduce the details of the offer to the Jews at all. From the very first chapter of John's gospel

the trial is closed, and all decided. From the first it was apparent that Christ was thoroughly rejected. Therefore most consistently the particulars of the testimony and the transfiguration itself find no place in John: they are not in the line of his object. What answers to the transfiguration, as far as anything can be said so to do in the Gospel of John, is given in the first chapter, where it is said, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Even if this be conceived to be an allusion to what was beheld on the holy mount, it is here mentioned only in a parenthetical way. The object was not to speak of the glory of the kingdom, but to show that there was a glory deeper far in His person: the kingdom is abundantly spoken of elsewhere. The theme of this Gospel is to show man completely worthless from the very first, the Son all that was blessed, not only from the beginning, but from everlasting. Hence it is that there is no room for the transfiguration in the Gospel of John.

But in Luke, the effect being that He displays the moral roots of things, we have it put much earlier as to its place. The reason is manifest. From the time of the transfiguration, or immediately before it, Christ made the announcement of His death. There was no question any longer about setting up the kingdom in Israel at that time; no object consequently in preaching Messiah as such or the kingdom now. The point was this: He was going to die; He was about shortly to be cast off by the chief priests, and elders, and scribes. What was the use then of talking, about reigning now? Hence there is gradually made known in prophetic parables another kind of manner in which the kingdom of God was to be meanwhile introduced. A sample of the kingdom as it

will be was seen on the mount of transfiguration; for the system of glory is only postponed, and in no wise given up. Thus that mount discloses a picture of what God had in His counsels. Before this, as is manifest, the preaching even of Christ was of One presented on the footing of man's responsibility. That is, the Jews were responsible to receive Him and the kingdom that He came with title to set up. The end of this was — what is seen uniformly in such moral tests — man, when tried, always found wanting. In his hands all comes to nothing. Here, then, He shows that it was all known to Him. He was going to die. This, of course, closes all pretension of man to meet his obligation on the ground of the Messiah, as before on that of law. His duty was plain, but he failed miserably. Consequently we are at once brought here in view of the kingdom, not provisionally offered, but according to the counsels of God, who had of course before Him the end from the beginning.

Let us then look at the peculiar manner in which the Spirit of God presents the kingdom through our evangelist. "And it came to pass about an eight days after these saying's, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray." The very mode of presenting the time differs from the others. All may not be aware that some men have found a difficulty here: where will they not? It seems to me a small difficulty this, between "after six days" (in Matthew and Mark), and "about an eight days after" (in Luke). Clearly, the one is an exclusive statement of time as the other is inclusive: a person has only to think in order to see that both were perfectly true. But I do not believe that it is without a divine reason that the Spirit of God was pleased to use the one in Matthew and Mark, and the

other only in Luke. There appears to be a connection between the form, “about an eight days after,” with our Gospel rather than the others; and for this simple reason, that this notation of time brings in that which, spiritually understood, goes beyond the work-a-day world of time, or even the kingdom in its Jewish idea and measure. The eighth day brings in not only resurrection, but the glory proper to it. Now this is what connects itself with the glimpse of the kingdom we catch in Luke, more than any other. No doubt there is that understood in the others, but it is not so openly expressed as in our Gospel, and we shall find this confirmed as we pursue the subject.

“And as he prayed, (that is, when there was the expression of His human perfectness in dependence upon God, of which Luke often speaks,) the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” The appearance set forth that which will be wrought in saints when they are changed at the coming of Christ. So even in our Lord’s case; though Scripture is most guarded, and it becomes us to speak reverently of His person, yet surely was He sent in the likeness of sinful flesh; but could He be so described when it was no longer the days of His flesh — when risen from the dead, when death has no more dominion over Him — when received up in glory? What then was seen on the holy mount, I judge to be rather the anticipatory semblance of what He is as glorified — the one being but temporary, while His present condition will endure for ever. “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease [departure] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Other elements of the

deepest interest crowd on us; companions of the Lord, men familiarly talking with Him, yet appearing in glory. Above all, note that when the full character of the change or resurrection is more clearly attested, and even beheld more distinctly than anywhere else, the all-importance of the death of Christ is invariably felt just as the value of the resurrection rises. Nor is there any better device of the enemy for weakening the grace of God in Christ's death than to hide the power of His resurrection. On the other hand, he who speculates on the glory of the resurrection, without feeling that the death of Christ was the only possible ground of it before God, and the only way open to us whereby we could have a share with Him in that glorious resurrection, is evidently one whose mind has taken in but a part of the truth. Such an one wants the simple, living faith of God's elect; for if he had it, his soul would be keenly alive to the claims of God's holiness and the necessities of our guilty condition, which the resurrection, blessed as it is, could in no way meet, nor righteously secure any blessing for us, save as founded upon that departure which He accomplished at Jerusalem But here no such thoughts or language appear. Not only is the glorious result before our eyes, the veil taken away, that we might see (as it were in company with these chosen witnesses) the kingdom as it will be, shown us here in a little sample of it, but we are admitted to hear the converse of the glorified saints with Jesus on its yet more glorious cause. They talked with Him, and the subject was His departure, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. How blessed to know that we have that same death, that same most precious truth, nearest of all for our hearts, because it is the perfect expression of His love, and of His suffering love; that we have it now;

that it is the very centre of our worship; that it is what habitually calls us together; that no joy in hope, no present favour, no heavenly privilege can ever obscure, but only give a fuller expression to our sense of the grace of His death, as, in truth, they are its fruits. Peter, and they that were with him, were asleep even here; and Luke mentions the circumstance, as especially introducing to our notice the moral state. Such, then, was the condition of the disciples, yea, of those who seemed to be pillars; the glory was too bright for them- they had scanty relish for it. The same disciples, who afterwards slept in the garden of agony, then slept in the mount of glory. And I am persuaded that the two tendencies are very closely akin, insensibility — indifference; he who is apt to go asleep in the presence of the one indicates too plainly that you cannot expect from him any adequate sense of the other.

But there is more for us to see, however passingly. “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 let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; not knowing what he said.” How little human, natural honour for Christ can be trusted even in a saint! Peter meant to magnify his Master. Let us trust God for it. His word brings in not now glorified men, but the God of glory. The Father could not suffer such a speech to come from Peter without a rebuke. No doubt Peter sincerely meant by it to honour the Lord on the mount, as Matthew and M Mark relate how he failed similarly just before; it was the indulgence of traditional thoughts and human feeling in view both of the cross and the

glory. So many now, too, like Peter, intend nothing but honour to the Lord by that which would really deprive Him of a special and blessed part of His glory. The word of God alone judges all things; but man, tradition, heeds it little. So it was with Peter; the same disciple who would not have the Lord to suffer, now proposes to put the Lord on a level with Elias or Moses. But God the Father speaks out of the cloud — that well-known sign of Jehovah's presence, of which every Jew, at least understood the meaning. "There came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him." Hence, whatever might be the place of Moses and Elias in the presence of Christ, it is no question of giving signal and like dignity to them all three, but of hearing the Son of God. As witnesses, they vanish before His testimony who was the object testified of. They were of the earth, He of heaven, and above all. To the Christ as such had they borne witness, even as the disciples hitherto; but He was rejected; and this rejection, in God's grace and wisdom, opened the way and laid the ground for the higher dignity of His person to shine as the Father knew Him, the Son, for the Church to be built thereon, and for communion with the heavenly glory. The Son has His own sole claim as the One to be heard now. So God the Father decides. What, in effect, could they say? They could only speak about Him, whose own words best declare what He is, as they only reveal the Father; and He was here to speak without their aid; He was here Himself to make known the true God; for this He is, and eternal life. "This is my beloved Son: hear him." Such is what the Father would communicate to the disciples upon earth. And this is most precious. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." For it is not merely the glorified speaking with

Jesus, but the Father communicating about Him, the Son, to saints on earth; not to saints glorified, but to saints in their natural bodies, giving them a taste of His own delight in His Son. He would not have them weaken the glory of His Son. No effulgence which shone out from the glorified men must be allowed for a moment to cause forgetfulness of the infinite difference between Him and them. “This is my beloved Son.” They were but servants, their highest dignity at best to be witnesses of Him. “This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close.”

Yet have I omitted another point that ought not to be left without special notice. While Peter spake, even before the Father’s voice was heard, there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered the cloud. And no wonder; because this was something entirely distinct from and above the glory of the kingdom for which they waited. Blessed as the kingdom is, and glorious, they did not fear when they saw the glorified men, nor Jesus Himself, the centre of that glory; they did not fear when they beheld this witness and sample of the kingdom; for every Jew looked for the kingdom, and expected the Messiah to set it up gloriously; and they knew well enough that, somehow or another, the saints of the past will be there along with the Messiah when He reigns over His willing people. None of these things produced terror; but, when the excellent glory came, overshadowing with its brightness (for light was there, and no darkness at all) the Shechinah of Jehovah’s presence, and when Peter, James, and John saw the men with the Lord Jesus entering that cloud, this was something entirely above

all previous expectation. No person from the Old Testament would gather such a thought as man thus in the same glory with God. But this is precisely what the New Testament opens out; this is one large part of what was hidden in God from ages and generations before. Indeed, it could not be disclosed till the manifestation and rejection of Christ. Now, it is that which forms the peculiar joy and hope of the Christian in the Son of God. It is not at all the same as the promised blessing and power when the kingdom dawns upon this long benighted earth. As star differs from star, and there is a celestial glory as well as a terrestrial, so there is that which is far above the kingdom — that which is founded upon the revealed person of the Son, and in communion with the Father and the Son, now enjoyed in the power of the Spirit sent down from heaven. Accordingly we have, immediately after this, the Father proclaiming the Son; because there is no key, as it were, to open that cloud for man, except His name — no means to bring Him there save His work. It is not the Messiah as such. Had He been merely the Messiah, into that cloud man never could have entered. It is because He was and is the Son. As He therefore came, so to speak, out of the cloud, so it was His to introduce into the cloud, though for this His cross too is essential, man being a sinner. Thus the fear of Peter and James and John at this particular point, when they saw men entering into and environed by Jehovah's presence-cloud, is, to my own mind, most significant. Now, that is given us here; and this, one may see, is connected very intimately with, not the kingdom, but the heavenly glory — the Father's house as entered in communion with the Son of God.

The Lord comes down from the mountain, and we have a picture, morally, of the world. “A man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.” It is a picture of man as now the object of Satan’s continual assault and possession; or, as elsewhere described, led captive of the devil at his will. “And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.” It grieves the Lord deeply, that though there was faith in the disciples, that faith was so dormant before difficulties, that it so feebly knew how to avail itself of the power of Christ on the one hand, for the deep distress of man on the other. Oh, what a sight this was to Christ! what feeling to His heart, that those who possessed faith should at the same time so little estimate the power of Him who was its object and resource! It is exactly what will be the ruin of Christendom, as it was the ground of the Lord closing all His dealings with His ancient people. And when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Look at all now, even at the present aspect of that which bears His name. There is the recognition of Christ and of His power, no doubt. Men are baptized in His name. Nominally His glory is owned by everybody but open infidels; but where is the faith He looks for? The comfort is this, however, that Christ never fails to carry on His own work; and, therefore, though we find the very gospel itself made merchandise of in the world, though you may see it prostituted in every way to minister to the vanity or pride of men, God does not therefore abandon His own purposes. Thus He does not forego the conversion of souls by it, even though grievously

fettered and perverted. Nothing is more simple. It is not that the Lord approves of the actual state of things, but that the grace of the Lord never can fail, and the work of Christ must be done. God will gather out of the world; yea, out of its worst. In short, the Lord shews here that the unbelief of the disciples was manifested by their little power to draw upon the grace that was in Him, to apply it to the case in hand. “And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.” And so after a manifestation of Satan’s power, the Lord delivers him again to his father.

“And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.” But Jesus at once speaks about His death. Nothing can be sweeter. There was that done which might well make Jesus appear great in their eyes as a matter of power. At once He tells them that He was going to be rejected, to die, to be put to death. “Let those sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.” He was the Deliverer from Satan’s power. The disciples were as nothing in the presence of the enemy: this was natural enough; but what shall we say when we hear that the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men? Here unbelief is ever at fault — never knows how to put these two things together; it does seem such a moral and mental contradiction, that the mightiest of deliverers should be apparently the weakest of all beings, delivered into the hands of men, His own creatures! But so it must be. If a sinner was to be saved for eternity — if the grace of God was to make a righteous basis for justifying the ungodly, Jesus, the Son of man, must be delivered into the hands of man; and then an infinitely fiercer fire must burn — the divine

judgment when God made Him sin for us; for all that men, Satan, even God Himself could do, comes upon Him to the uttermost.

The Lord, then, having Himself shown what He was, not only in His power which vanquished Satan but also in that weakness in which He was crucified of men, now reads a lesson to the disciples on the score of their reasoning; for the Spirit of God brings this in now, their discussion which of them should be greatest — a vain, unworthy contest at any time, but how much more so in the presence of such a Son of man! It is thus, one can see, that Luke brings facts and principles together in his Gospel. He makes a child, despised of those who would be great, to be a rebuke to the self — exalting disciples. They had been little enough against Satan's power: would they be great in spite of their Master's humiliation? Again, He lays bare what manner of spirit was in John, though not giving it in the point of view of service, as we saw in Mark. It may not have been forgotten, that there we had it very particularly as the vehicle for instructing us in the weighty duty that we are to acknowledge the power of God in the service of others, though they may not be "with us." But that point does not appear in Luke — at least not its details, but simply the moral principle. "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

Then, again, we have His censure of the spirit of James and John in consequence of the affront the Samaritans put on our Lord. It was the same egotism in another form, and the Lord turns and rebukes them, telling them that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of; for the Son of man was not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. All these lessons are plainly

impressions, so to speak, of the cross — its shame, rejection, anguish, whatever men chose to put on the name of Jesus, or on those that belong to Jesus — Jesus who was on His way to the cross; for so it is expressly written here. He was steadfastly setting His face to go to Jerusalem, where His departure was to be accomplished.

Accordingly we have given here another set of lessons closing the chapter, but still connected with what went before — the judgment of what should not work, and the indication of that which ought to work, in the hearts of those that profess to follow the Lord. These are brought together after a notable manner. First, “A certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Here it is the detection of what was cloked under an apparent frankness and devotedness; but these seemingly fine fruits were entirely after the flesh, utterly worthless, and offensive to the Lord, who at once puts His finger upon the point. Who is the man that is really ready to follow the Lord whithersoever He goes? The man that has found all in Him, and wants not earthly glory from Him. Jesus was going to die Himself; here He had not a place where to lay His head. How could He give anything to him? “And he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto Him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Now, here is real faith; and where this exists, it is more than a theory — difficulties are felt. Thus the man begins to make excuse, because he feels, on the one side, the attraction of the word of Jesus; but at the same time he is not freed from the force that drags him into nature; he is alive to the seriousness of the matter in conscience, but realises the obstacles in the way. Hence, he pleads

the strongest natural claim upon his heart, a son's duty to a dead father. But the Lord would have him leave that to those who had no such call of the Lord. "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." To another, who says, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home in my house." The Lord replies that the kingdom of God is necessarily paramount, and its service all-engrossing; so that if a man has put his hand to the plough, woe to him if he look back! He is unfit for the kingdom of God. Throughout who can fail to see the judgment of the heart, man's nature proved, however fair the form? What death to self the service of Christ implies! Otherwise, what personal faithlessness, even if one escape the evil of bringing in rubbish into God's house and, it may be, of defiling His temple! Such is the fruit of self-confidence where Satan acquires a footing.

Luke 10. Next comes before us the remarkable mission of the seventy, which is peculiar to Luke. This has, indeed, a solemn and final character, with an urgency beyond that of the twelve, in chapter 9. It is an errand of grace, sent out as they were by One whose heart yearned over a great harvest of blessing; but it is clothed with a certain last warning, and with woes here pronounced on the cities where He had wrought in vain. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." This gives it, therefore, a serious and peculiar force, yet withal suitable to our Gospel. Without dwelling upon the particulars, I would simply remark that, when the seventy returned, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name," the Lord (while he saw in clear vista before Him Satan fallen from

heaven, the casting out of devils by the disciples being but the first blow, according to that power which will utterly put down Satan at the end) at the same time states that this is not the better thing, the proper subject for their joy. No power over evil, however true now, however in the end displaying in full the glory of God, is to be compared to the joy of His grace, the joy of not merely seeing Satan turned out, but of God brought in; and meanwhile of themselves, in the communion of the Father and of the Son, leaving their portion and their names enrolled in heaven. It is a heavenly blessedness, as it becomes more and more manifest that is to be the place of the disciples, and that in Luke's Gospel more than in any other of the synoptists. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Not that it is the Church which is here revealed, but at the least a very characteristic feature of the Christian place which is breaking through the clouds. In that hour Jesus accordingly rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Here you will observe it is not, as in Matthew, in connection with the break up of Judaism. Not only was the total destruction of Satan's power before Him, the woman's Seed, by man, for man; but, diving deeper than the kingdom, He explains those counsels of the Father in the Son, to whom all things are delivered, and whose glory was inscrutable to man, the key to His present rejection, and the secret and best blessing for His saints. It is not so much here the Christ — rejected and

suffering Son of man: but the Son, the revealer of the Father, whom the Father alone knows. And with what delight He congratulates the disciples privately on that which they saw and heard (ver. 3, 4), though we find some declarations coming out more emphatically afterwards; but still it was all clear before Him. Here it is the satisfaction of the Lord in the bright side of the subject, not merely the contrast with the dead body of Judaism, as it were, which was completely judged and left behind.

What we find after this is an unfolding of the Sabbath-days, in which the Lord demonstrated to the unwilling Jews that the bond between God and Israel was broken (see Matt. 11, 12): for this was the meaning of the apparent breach of the Sabbaths, when He vindicated the disciples in eating of the corn on the one, and healed the withered hand publicly on the other. But here we meet with another line of things; we have, according to Luke's manner, one who was instructed in the law weighed and found wanting morally. A lawyer comes and says, "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, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"

This sets forth, then, the difficulties of the legal mind; it is a technicality: he cannot understand what is meant by his "neighbour." Intellectually it was no such feat to penetrate the meaning of that word, "neighbour." But

the consequences morally were grave; if it meant what it said, had he ever in his life felt and acted as if he had a neighbour? He gave it up, therefore. It was a mysterious something that the elders had nowhere solved, a case that was not yet ruled in the Sanhedrim, — what was meant by this inscrutable “neighbour.” Alas! it was the fallen heart of man that wanted to get out of a plain duty, but a duty which demanded love, the last thing in the world he possessed. The great difficulty was himself; and so he sought to justify himself — an utter impossibility! For in truth he was a sinner; and the thing for him is to confess his sins. Where one has not been brought to own himself, and to justify God against himself, all is wrong and false; everything of God is misunderstood, and His word seems darkness, instead of light.

Mark how our Lord puts the case in the beautiful parable of the good Samaritan. It was, if I may so say of Him as a man, the single eye and the heart that perfectly understood what God was, and enjoyed it; that never, therefore, had difficulty in finding out who was his neighbour. For, in truth, grace finds a neighbour in every one that needs love. The man that needs human sympathy, that needs divine goodness and its clear testimony, though it be through a man upon the earth, he is my neighbour. Now, Jesus was the only man who was walking in the whole power of divine love, though, I need not say, this was but a little part of His glory. As such, therefore, He found no riddle to solve in the question, Who is my neighbour?

Evidently it is not the mere dispensational setting aside of the ancient people of God, but the proving of the heart, the will of man detected where it used the law to

justify itself, and to get rid of the plain demand of duty to one's fellows. Where in all this was love maintained, that necessary answer in man to the character of God in an evil world? Certainly not in the lawyer's question, which betrayed the duty unknown; as surely was it in Him whose parabolic reply most aptly imaged His own feelings and life, the sole perfect exhibition of God's will in love to a neighbour, which this poor world has ever had before it.

The rest of the chapter belongs to the eleventh, properly and naturally following up this truth. What a mercy that, through us then, in Jesus, there is active goodness here below, which, after all, is the only thing that ever accomplishes the law! It is very important to see that grace really does fulfil God's will in this: "That the righteousness of the law," as it is said, "might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The lawyer was walking after the flesh; there was no perception of grace, and consequently no truth in him. what a miserable life he must have been living, and he a teacher of God's law, without even knowing who was his neighbour! At least, so he pretended.

On the other hand, as we are next taught, where there is grace, everything is put in its place, and it shows itself in two forms. The first is the value for the word of Jesus. Grace prizes it above all things. Even if you look at two persons who may both be objects of Christ's love, what a difference it makes for the one whose heart delights most in grace! And where there is the opportunity of hearing the word of God from Jesus, or of Jesus, this is the chief jewel at the feet of Jesus. Such is the true moral posture of the one who knows grace best. Here it was Mary who was found sitting, at the feet of Jesus, to

hear His word. She had decided rightly, as faith (I say not the believer) always does. As for Martha, she was distracted with bustle. Her one thought was what she could do for Jesus, as One known after the flesh, not without a certain thought, as ever, of what was due to herself. No doubt it was meant for, and after a certain style was, honour to Him; but still it was honour of a Jewish, carnal, worldly sort. It was paid to His bodily presence there, as a man, and the Messiah, with a little bit of honour to herself; no doubt, and to the family. This naturally comes out in Luke, the delineator of such moral traits. Still as for Mary's conduct, it seemed to Martha no better than indifference to her many anxious preparations. Vexed at this, she goes to the Lord with a complaint against Mary, and would have liked the Lord to have joined her, and set His seal to its justice. The Lord, however, at once vindicates the hearer of His word. "But one thing is needful." Not Martha, but Mary, had chosen that good part which should not he taken away from her. When grace works in this world it is not to bring in what suits a moment of passing time, but that which ensures eternal blessing. As part of God's grace, therefore, we have the word of Jesus revealing and communicating what is eternal, what shall not be taken away.

Remark another thing next. It is not only the all-importance of the word of Jesus, not man's misuse of the law (which we have seen but too clearly in the lawyer, who ought to have taught, instead of asked, who my neighbour is), but now we have the place and value of prayer. This is equally needful in its season, and is found here in its true place. Clearly I must receive from God before there can be the going out of my heart to God.

There must first be what is imparted by God — His revelation of Jesus. There is no faith without His word. (Rom. 10) My thoughts of Jesus may be ruin to me; indeed, I am very sure, if they were only my thoughts of Jesus, they must deceive and destroy my soul, and be injurious to everybody else. But here we find the weighty intimation, that it is not enough that there should be the reception of the word of Jesus, and even at the feet of Jesus. He looks at the disciples need of the exercise of heart with God. And this is shown in more ways than one.

Luke 11. First of all we have prayer, according to the mind of Jesus, for the disciples in their actual wants and state; and a most blessed prayer it is, leaving out the millennial allusions of Matt. 6, but retaining all the general and moral petitions. The Lord next insists on the importunity or perseverance of prayer, with the blessing attached to earnestness with God. Thirdly, it may be added, that the Lord touches on the gift of the Spirit, and in connection with this only in our Gospel — “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give [not merely good things, but] the Holy Spirit [the best gift] to them that ask him?” Thus the great characteristic blessing to the Gentiles (compare Gal. 3), and of course to the believing Jew also, was this gift which the Lord here instructs the disciples to ask for. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given. There was exercise of heart Godward. They were really disciples; they were born of God, yet had they to pray for the Holy Spirit to be given them. Such was the state going on while the Lord Jesus was here below. It was not only (as in John 14) that He would ask the Father, and the Father

would send; but they too were to ask the Father, who would assuredly, as He did, give the Holy Spirit to them that asked Him. And I am far from denying that there might be cases at this present time, of what some might call an abnormal kind, where persons were really convinced of sin, but without the settled peace which the gift of the Holy Ghost imparts. Here, at the very least, the principle of this would apply; and for this it might be of moment, therefore, that we should have it plainly in the Gospel of Luke; because this was not the dispensational instruction as to the great change that was coming in, but rather filled with profound moral principles of larger import, though to be influenced, no doubt, by the development of the great facts of divine grace. Thus the sending down of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost brought in an immense modification of this truth. His presence from that moment undoubtedly involved greater things than the heavenly Father giving the Spirit to the individuals who sought it of Him. And there was the grand point of the Father's estimate of the work of Jesus, to which the Spirit's descent was an answer. Therefore, a person might be brought in, so to speak, all at once; he might be converted and rest upon the redemption of Jesus, and receive the Holy Ghost, practically, all at once. Here, however, it is the case of the disciples taught to ask before the blessing had ever been given. Certainly, at that time, we see the two things distinctly. They were born of the Spirit already, but were waiting for the further blessing — the gift of the Spirit: a privilege given them in answer to prayer. Nothing can be plainer. There is no good in enfeebling Scripture. Evangelical tradition is as false to the Spirit, as popish is to Christ work and its glorious results for the believer

even now on earth. What we need is, to understand the Scriptures in the power of God.

After this, the Lord cast out a dumb devil from one who, when delivered, spoke. This kindles into a flame the hatred of the Jews. They could not deny the power, but wickedly impute it to Satan. In their eyes or lips it was not God, but Beelzebub, the chief of the devils, who cast them out. Others, tempting Him, sought for a sign from heaven. The Lord thereon spreads out the awful consequence of this unbelief and imputation of God's power in Him to the Evil One. In Matthew, it is a sentence on that generation of the Jews; here on wider grounds for man, whoever and wherever he may be; for all here is moral, and not merely the question of the Jew. It was folly and suicidal for Satan to cast out his own. Their own sons condemned them. The truth was, the kingdom of God was come upon them; and they knew it not, but rejected it with blasphemy. Finally He adds, When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." There is no application specially to the Jew, as in Matthew; it is left general to man. Hence, "So shall it be with this wicked generation, disappears.

Thus, although the Lord was as yet dealing with a remnant, and was here in view of the doom of that Christ-rejecting generation of the Jews, for this very reason the Spirit of God makes His special design by Luke the more apparent and undeniable. It would have

been natural to have left these instructions within those precincts. Not so: Luke was inspired to enlarge their bearing, or rather record what would deal with any soul in any place or time. It is made a question here of man, and of the last state of him whom the unclean spirit has somehow left for a season, but without salvation, or the positive new work of divine grace. He may be a changed character, as men say; he may become moral, or even religious; but is he born again? If not, so much the more sorrowful — so much the worse is his last state than the first. Supposing you have that which is ever so fair, if it be not the Holy Ghost's revelation to, and the life of Christ in, your soul, every privilege or blessing short of this will surely be proved to fail. And this the Lord follows up afterwards, when a woman, hearing Him, lifts up her voice and says, " Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." Immediately He answers, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." It is evidently the same great moral lesson: no natural link with Him is to be compared with hearing and keeping God's word; and so our Lord pursues next. Were they asking for a sign? They proved their condition, and lowered themselves morally beneath the Ninevites, who repented at Jonah's preaching. Did not the report of Solomon's wisdom draw from the utmost parts of the earth a queen of the south? Jonah is here a sign, not of death and resurrection, but by his preaching. What sign had the queen of Sheba? What sign had the men of Nineveh? Jonah preached; but was not Christ preaching? That queen came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but what was the wisdom of the wisest to compare with Christ's wisdom? Was He not the wisdom and the power of God? Yet, after all they had seen and heard, they

could ask a sign! It was evident that there was no such guilt of old; but, on the contrary, these Gentiles, whether in or from the ends of the earth, spite of their gross darkness, repulsed the unbelief of Israel, and proved how just would be their doom in the judgment.

Our Lord here adds an appeal to conscience. The light (set in Himself) was not secret, but in the right place: God had failed in nothing as to this. But another condition was requisite to see — the state of the eye. Was it simple, or evil? If evil, how hopeless the darkness before that light! If received with simplicity, not only is light enjoyed, but shines all around, with no part dark. To the Pharisees, who wondered that the Lord washed not His hands before dining, He pronounces a most withering rebuke upon their care for exterior cleanness, and indifference to their inward corruption, their jealousy for details of observance, and forgetfulness of the great moral obligations, their pride, and their hypocrisy. To one of the lawyers, who complained that thereby He reproached them, the Lord utters woe upon woe for them also. Tampering with the law and holy things of God, where there is no faith, is the direct road to ruin, the sure occasion of divine judgment. A like doom awaits Babylon as then was about to fall on Jerusalem. (Rev. 18)

In Luke 12 the Lord furnishes the disciples with the path of faith in the midst of men’s secret evil, open hatred, and worldliness. On His rejection their testimony must go on. First, they were to beware of the Pharisees’ leaven, which is hypocrisy, and to cherish the consciousness of the light of God to which the believer belongs (ver. 1- 3). This, then, is the preservative power. Satan works by deceit as well as by violence. (ver. 4).

God works not only in light, as we have seen, but by love (5-7), and the confidence He invites to in Himself. “But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Then immediately guarding against the abuse of this, which is always true, and true for a believer, although it be, so to speak, the lower end of the truth the Lord brings in the love of the Father, asking, “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: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

He shows next the all-importance of the confession of His name, with the consequence of denying Him; then, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which would not be forgiven, whatever grace is shown to those who blasphemed the Son of man; and in contrast with this the promised succour of the Spirit in presence of a hostile world-church (ver. 8-12). Then a person appeals to the Lord to settle a question of this world. This, however, is not His work now. Of course, as Messiah, He will have to do with the earth, and will set the world right when He comes to reign; but His actual task was dealing with souls. For Him, and for men too, did not unbelief shroud their eyes, it was a question of heaven or hell, of what is eternal and of another world. Hence He absolutely refuses to be a judge and divider of what appertained to the earth. It is that which many a Christian has not learned of his Master.

Next the Lord exposes the folly of man in his covetous desire after present things. In the midst of prosperity, suddenly, that very night, God requires of the rich fool his soul. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself,

and is not rich toward God." The Lord then shows the disciples where their true riches should lie. Faith is meant to deliver from anxiety and lust. It is not food and raiment. He who fed the uncareful ravens would not fail His children, who were far more to Him than the birds. Such care, on the contrary, is the plain evidence of poverty Godward. Why are you so busy providing? It is the confession that you are not satisfied with what you have got. And what does it all come to? The lilies outshine Solomon in all his glory: how much does God interest Himself in His children? What occupies the nations who know Him not is unworthy of the saint who is called to seek God's kingdom, sure that all these thing's shall be added. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

Again, this leads me to notice briefly the way in which this ineffable love is shown, not only by the Father, but by the Son, and that in two forms — the Son's love to those that wait for Him, and to those that work for Him. The waiting for Him we have in verses 35, 36: "Let your loins be girded 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." It is the heart filled with Christ; and the consequence is, Christ's heart goes out towards them. When He comes, He seats them, so to speak, at table, does everything for them even in glory. But then there is working for the Lord: this comes in afterwards. "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." It is not "so watching," but "so doing." It is a question of working for Him. and this has its own sweet and needed place. Still remark that it is secondary to watching: Christ Himself always, even before His work. Nevertheless He is pleased to associate the Gospel with Himself; very graciously, as we know in the Gospel of Mark; and it is exact]y there we might expect it, if we knew its character: He binds up the work, so to speak, with Himself. But when we come in Luke to moral analogies, if I may so term it, instead of giving it all together, like the Gospel devoted to the workman and the work, here we listen to One who unfolds to us distinction of heart and hand in relation to His coming. Blessed he who shall be found working for the Lord when He comes: surely he shall be made ruler over all that the Son of man has. Yet mark the difference. This is exaltation over His inheritance. As for those that are found watching for Him, it will be association -joy, rest, glory, love — with Himself.

Observe another thing in this part of Luke, and strikingly characteristic too. Blessed as all we have heard is for those that are His, what will it be for those that believe not? Accordingly, and in a form that commends itself to the conscience, we see the difference between the servant who knew his master's will and did it not, and the servant who knew not his master's will (ver. 47, 48). Neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor John, of course, say anything like this. Luke here sheds the light of Christ on the respective responsibility of the Gentile graffed into the olive tree and of the Pagan world. As

there is in Christendom the servant cognizant of his Master's will, but indifferent or rebellious, so on the other hand, outside Christendom there is the servant wholly ignorant of His will, and, of course, lawless and evil. They are both of them beaten; but he that knew his Master's will and did it not shall be beaten with more stripes. To be baptized, and to call on the Lord's name in outward profession, instead of lightening the burden in the day of judgment for the hypocrites, will, on the contrary, bring on them so much more severity. The righteousness and the wisdom of this dealing, is so much the more remarkable, as it is the exact opposite of the early doctrine of Christendom. A notion prevailed, perhaps universally after the first century or two, that while all persons dying in sin would be judged, the baptized would have a far better portion in hell than the unbaptized. Such was the doctrine of the fathers; Scripture is dead against it. In what we have just had before us, Luke gives the Lord Jesus not only anticipating but completely and for ever excluding, the folly.

Next, whatever may be the fulness of Christ's love, the effect would now be to kindle a fire. For that love came with divine light which judged man; and man would not bear it. The consequence is, that the fire was already kindled. It did not merely await another day or execution from God, but even then was it at work. Assuredly the love of Christ was not produced by His sufferings, any more than God's love. Ever was it there only awaiting the full expression of man's hatred before it would burst all bounds, and flow out freely in every direction of need and misery. Such is our Lord's wonderful opening out of great moral principles in this chapter. Men, professors,

heathen, saints, in their love for Christ, and service too, all have their portion.

The state, then, was the worst possible — utter, hopeless, social ruin. which His coming and presence had brought to light. How was it they had not discerned this time? Why even of themselves did they not judge aright? It was from no lack of evil in His adversaries, or of trace in Him. The close of the chapter takes up the Jew, showing that they then were in imminent danger, that a great question pressed on them. In their suit with God, the Lord advised them, as it were, to use arbitration while He was in the way: the result of despising this would be their committal to prison till the uttermost farthing was paid. Such was the admonition to Israel, who are now, as all know, under the consequence of neglecting the word of the Lord.

Luke 13 insists on this, and shows how vain it was to talk of the objects of signal judgments. Except they repented, they must likewise perish. Judgments thus misused lead men to forget their own guilty and ruined condition in the sight of God. He urges, therefore, repentance strongly. He admits, no doubt, that there was a term of respite. Indeed, it was Himself; the Lord Jesus, who had pleaded for a further trial. If; after this the fig tree should be unfruitful, it must be cut down. And so it was: judgment came after grace, not law. How little they felt that it was a most true picture of themselves, Christ and God Himself so dealing with them because of Him. But the Lord subsequently lets us see that grace could act in the midst of such a state. Accordingly, in His healing, of the woman bowed down with the spirit of infirmity, he displays the goodness of God even in such a day when judgment was at the doors,

and rebuked the hypocritical wickedness of the heart that found fault with His goodness, because it was the sabbath day. “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.” As ever, the heart is made manifest in Luke — the adversaries of the truth on the one hand, and those on the other whom grace made the friends of Christ or the objects of His bounty. But the Lord also shows the form that the kingdom of God would take. It would not have power now, but rather from a little beginning become great in the earth, with noiseless progress, as of leaven conforming to itself till the three measures were leavened. And such, in point of fact, has been the character of the kingdom of God presented here below. It is here no question of seed, good or bad, but of the spread of doctrine nominally, at least, Christian. How far such a progress meets the mind of God, we must compare facts with Scripture in order to judge aright. If Israel was then in danger of a judgment which would surely come, what would be the case with the kingdom of God outwardly in the world? In truth, instead of occupying themselves with the question whether those destined to salvation (or the godly Jews) were few, it would be well to think of the only way in which any one could be put morally right before God; it was by striving to enter in at the strait gate: without the new birth none can enter. Many might seek to enter in, but would not be able. What is here meant? Is it a difference between striving and seeking? I doubt that this covers the true bearing of our Lord’s language; for thus he who throws the stress upon striving or seeking,

makes it a question of energy, greater or less. This does not seem to me what our Lord meant; but that many would seek to enter into the, kingdom, not at the strait gate, but by some other way. They might seek to enter in by baptism, by law-keeping, by prayer, or some vain plea of God's mercy: all these unbelieving resources dishonour Christ and His work.

The striving to enter in at the strait gate implies, to my mid, a man brought to a true sense of sin, and casting, himself upon God's grace in Christ — repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Himself is the strait gate — at least, Christ Himself received thus by faith and repentance. So our Lord, in opening out this, proclaims the judgment of Israel — indeed, of any who should like well the blessing, but refuse God's way, even Christ. He presents, accordingly, the Jewish people cast aside, the Gentiles coming, from east, west, north, and south, and brought into the kingdom of God. "Behold, there are last which shall be first, and first which shall be last." And then the chapter closes with the Pharisees pretending zeal for Him: "Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee." But the Lord proclaims in their ears that He would not be hindered in His service till His hour was come; and that it was not a question of Herod and Galilee, but of Jerusalem, the proud city of solemnities; it was there the prophet of God must fall. No prophet should be cut off except at Jerusalem; such is its painful, fatal peculiarity, the honour of providing a grave for God's rejected and slain witness. Men might say, as they did, that no prophet arose out of Galilee; and it was false; but certainly this was true, that if a prophet fell, he fell in Jerusalem. Yet the Lord then mourned over such a

Jerusalem, and does not leave the Jews absolutely desolate, except for a time, but holds out the hope that the day should come when their heart should turn to Him (2 Cor. 3), saying) “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” This closes, then, the Lord’s dealings in reference to Jerusalem, in contrast with the heavenly light in the disciples’ portion. He depicts grace from first to last, save only in those that had no faith in Him; and on the other hand, he lets us know, that whatever might be the yearnings of grace over Jerusalem, this is the end of it all in man’s hands.

The Lord is seen, in Luke 14 resuming the ways of grace. Once more He shows that, spite of those who preferred the sign of the Old covenant to Messiah in the grace of the New, the sabbath day furnished Him an opportunity for illustrating the goodness of God. In chapter 13. it was the spirit of infirmity — the power of Satan; Here it was a simple case of human malady. The lawyers and Pharisees were then watching Him, but Jesus openly raises the question; and as they held their peace, He takes and heals the man with the dropsy, and lets him go, answering their thought by an irresistible appeal to their own ways and conscience. Man who seeks to do good to what belongs to himself, is not entitled to dispute God’s right to act in love to the miserable objects that He deigns to count His.

Then the Lord takes notice of another thing, not man’s hypocritical selfishness, which would not have God to gratify His love to suffering wretchedness, but man’s love of being somebody in this world. The Lord brings into evidence another great principle of His own action — self-abasement in contrast with self-exaltation. If a man desires to be exalted, the only ways according to

God, is to be lowly, to abase himself; it is the spirit that suits the kingdom of God. So He tells the disciples that, in making a feast, they were not to act on the principle of asking friends, or men who could return it, but as saints called to reflect the character and will of God. Therefore it should be rather those that could make no present requital, looking to the day of recompense, on God's part, at the resurrection of the just.

On some one crying, out, What a blessed thing it must be to eat bread in the kingdom of God! the Lord shews the fact to be quite the contrary. For what is it that the Lord has been doing ever since? He is inviting men to eat bread, as it were, in His kingdom. But how do they treat the invitation of grace in the gospel? "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant 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." Difference is observable. In Luke there is the omission of Matthew's first message. But, besides that, the excuses are gone into individually. One person says, "I have bought a piece of ground," which he must go and see; another man says he has bought five yoke of oxen, which he has to prove; another says he has married a wife, and on this account he cannot come. That is, we have the various decent plausible reasons that man gives for not submitting to the righteousness of God, for delaying his acceptance of the grace of God. So the servant comes and reports to his lord, who thereupon, being angry, says, "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."

Thus the persistence of grace, spite of just displeasure, is a characteristic and beautiful feature of this Gospel. The lord sent his servant thereupon to the highways and hedges (or enclosures), compelling them to come in, that, as it is said, “my house may be filled.” Of this we hear nothing in Mark and Matthew. Indeed, Matthew gives us quite a different aspect from that which we have here. There the king is seen sending forth his armies, and burning up the city. How marvellous the wisdom of God, both in what He inserts, and in what He leaves out! Matthew adds also the judgment of the robeless guest at the end — the man who had intruded, trusting to his work, or to any or all ordinances, or to both, but who had not put on Christ. This was peculiarly in its place, because this Gospel attests the dealings of grace which would take the place of Judaism, both externally and internally.

After this the Lord turns to the multitude. As He had shown the hindrance on man’s part to coming, so He gravely warns those that were following Him in great numbers, and says, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” The moral difficulties are most earnestly pressed upon those who were so ready to follow Him. Would it not be well and wise to sit down first and count the cost of building the tower completely? to consider whether, with the strength they had, they could cope with the vastly greater forces against them? Yet is it no question of mustering resources after a human way, but of forsaking all one’s own, and so being Christ’s disciple. There is such a thing as persons beginning well, and turning out good-for-

nothing. “Salt is good;” but what if it becomes savourless? Wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is fit neither for land nor dunghill. They cast it out (or, it is cast out). “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Then follows a profound and lovely unfolding of grace in Luke 15. In the close of the preceding chapter, the impossibility for man in flesh to be a disciple was made evident. Such was the great lesson there. But now we have the other side of grace. If man failed in attempting to be a disciple, how is it that God makes disciples? Thus we have the goodness of God to sinners brought out in three forms. First, the shepherd goes after the wandering sheep. This is very clearly grace as shown in Christ the Son of man, who came so seek and to save that which was lost.

The next parable is not of the Son who bears the burden; for there is but one Saviour, even Christ. Nevertheless the Spirit of God has a part, and a very blessed part, in the salvation of every soul brought to God. It is not as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life, nor as the Great Shepherd brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, laying the sheep once lost, now found, on His shoulders rejoicing, as it is presented in Luke only. What we have here is the figure of a woman that lights a candle, sweeps the house, and uses the most diligent exertion till the lost thing is found. Is not this in beautiful harmony with the function of the Spirit as to the sinner’s soul? I cannot doubt this is seen in the woman’s part (not, if I may so say, the prominent public actor, who is ever Christ the Son). The Spirit of God has rather the energetic agency, comparatively a hidden power, however visible the effects. It is not One that acts as a person outside; and

this therefore was most fitly set forth by the woman inside the house. It is the Spirit of God working within, His private and searching operation in secret with the soul however truly also the candle of the word is made to shine. Need I remark that it is the Spirit of God's part to cause the word to bear on men as a shining light? It is not the Shepherd who lights the candle, but He bears the stray sheep on His shoulders. We know very well that the Word of God, the Shepherd, is looked at elsewhere as the true light Himself; but here it is a candle which is lit, and therefore quite inapplicable to the person of Christ. But it is precisely that which the Spirit of God does. The word of God preached, the Scripture, may have been read a hundred times before; but at the critical moment it is light to the lost one. Diligence is used in every way; and we know how the Spirit of God condescends to this, what painstaking He uses in pressing the word home upon the soul, and causing the light to shine exactly at the right moment where all before was dark. In this second parable, accordingly, it is not active going away from God which is seen; a condition worse than this appears — a dead thing. It is the only parable of the three which presents the lost one not as a living creature, but as dead. From elsewhere we know that both are true; and the Spirit of God describes the sinner both as one alive in the world going away from God (Rom. 3), and as dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2) We could not have a proper conception of the sinner's condition unless we had these two things. One parable was needed to shew us a sinner in the activities of life departing from God, and another to represent the sinner as dead in trespasses and sins. Here exactly these two things are seen, the lost sheep shewing the one, and the lost piece of money the other.

But in addition to these, there is a third parable necessary: not only a strayed sheep and a lost inanimate piece of money, but, besides, the moral history of man away from the presence of God, but coming to Him again. Hence the parable of the lost son takes man from the very first, traces the beginning of his departure, and the course and character of the misery of a sinner on the earth, his repentance, and his final peace and joy in the presence of God, who Himself rejoices as truly as man objects. Practically this is true of every sinner. In other words, there is a little yielding to sin, or desire to be independent of God — a farther and farther depth of evil in every person's history. I do not believe that the chapter discusses the question of a backsliding child of God, though a common principle of course, here and there, would apply to the restoration of a soul. This is a favourite idea with some who are more familiar with doctrine than with Scripture. But there are objections, plain, stronger, and decisive, against understanding the chapter thus. First, it does not suit, in the smallest degree, what we have just seen in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost piece of money. Indeed it seems to me impossible to reconcile such an hypothesis even with the simple and repeated expression "lost." For who will affirm that, when a believer slips away from the Lord, he is lost? The most opposed to this, singular to say, is the very school most prone to that misinterpretation. When a man believes, he is a lost sheep found; he may not run well, no doubt; but never does Scripture view him afterwards as a lost sheep. Just so is it with the lost drachma; and so, finally, with the lost son. The prodigal was not, in the first instance, an unfaithful saint; he was not a backslider merely, but "lost" and "dead." Are these strong figures ever true of

him who is a child of God by faith? They are precisely true, if we look at Adam and his sons, viewed as children of God in a certain sense. So the apostle Paul told the Athenians, that “we are also his offspring.” Men are God’s offspring, as having souls and moral responsibility to God, made after His similitude and His image here below. In these and other respects men differ from the beast, which is merely a living creature that perishes in death. A beast, of course, has a spirit (else it could not live); but still, when it dies, the spirit goes down to the earth, even as its body; whereas a man’s spirit, when he dies (no matter as to this whether lost or saved), goes to God, as it came directly from God. There is that which, either for good or evil, is immortal in the spirit of man, as being breathed directly and immediately from God in the nostrils of man. Of the evangelists, Luke is the one who most speaks of man in this solemn light; and this, not only in his Gospel, but in the Acts of the Apostles. It connects itself with the large moral place he gives man, and as the object of divine grace. “A certain man had two sons;” so that man is looked at from his very origin. Then we have this son going farther and farther away from God, till he comes to the worst. There lay the opportunity of grace; and God brought him to a sense, not perhaps deep but most real, of his distance from God Himself as well as his degradation, sin, and ruin. It was by the pinch of want he was brought to himself — by intense personal misery; for God deigns to use any and every method in His grace. It was shame, and suffering, and wretchedness, which led him to feel he was perishing; and wherefore? He looks back to Him from whom he departed, and grace puts into his heart the conviction of goodness in God as of badness in himself. This was really wrought in him; it was repentance —

repentance towards God; for it was not a mere conscientious judgment upon himself and his past conduct, but self-judgment from God, to which His goodness led Him — led him by faith back to Himself "I will arise"' then he says, "and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight."

However there is no need at present to dwell on this, which no doubt, is familiar to most here. This only it may be well to add, that we have here evidently a moral history; but then there is another side, and that is, the ways of Christ, and the Father's grace with the returned prodigal. Accordingly we have this in two parts: first, the reception of the prodigal; next, the joy and love of God the Father, and the prodigal's communion with it when he had been received. The father receives him with open arms, ordering the best robe, everything worthy of himself, to be brought out in honour of the prodigal. Afterwards, we see the son in the father's presence. It sets forth the joy of God reproducing itself in all that are there. It is not a sketch of what we shall taste when we go to heaven, but rather the spirit of heaven made good now on earth in the worship of those who are brought to God. It is not at all a question of what we were, save only to enhance that which grace gives and makes us. All turns on the excellent efficacy of Christ and the Father's own joy. This forms the material and the character of the communion, which is in principle Christian worship.

On the other hand, it was too true that the joy of grace is intolerable to the self-righteous man; he has no heart for God's goodness to the lost; and the scene of joyful communion with the Father provokes in him outrageous opposition to God's way and will. For he is not a self-

righteous Christian, any more than the prodigal represents a believer overtaken in a fault. No Christian is contemplated as cherishing such feeling as these though I deny not that legalism involves the principle. But here it is one who would not come in. Every Christian is brought to God. He may not fully enjoy or understand his privileges, but he has a keen sense of his short-comings, and feels the need of divine mercy, and rejoices in it for others. Would the Lord describe the Christian as outside the presence of God? Accordingly, the elder brother here, I have no doubt, represents such as condemned Jesus for eating with sinners; the self-righteousness more particularly of the Jew, as indeed of any denier of grace.

The next chapter (Luke 16) opens out distinct and weighty instruction for the disciples, and this in reference to earthly things. First of all, our Lord explains here that the tenure of earthly things is now gone. It was no longer a question of holding a stewardship, but of giving it up. The steward was judged. Such was the truth manifest in Israel. Continuance in his old earthly position was now closed for the unjust steward; and for him it was simply a question of his prudence in present opportunities, with a view to the future. The unjust steward is made the vehicle of divine teaching to us how to make the future our aim. He, being, a prudent man, thinks of what is to become of him when he loses his stewardship; he looks before him; he thinks of the future; he is not engrossed in the present; he weighs and considers how he is to get on when he is no longer steward. So he makes a wise use of his master’s goods. With people indebted to his master, he strikes off a great deal from this bill and a

great deal from that, in order to make friends for himself. The Lord says this is the way we are to treat earthly things. Instead of tenaciously clutching at what you have not yet got, and keeping what you have not yet got, and keeping what you have, on the contrary, regard them as your master's goods, and treat them as the unjust steward in the parable. Rise above the unbelief which looks at money, or other present possessions, as if they were your own things. It is not so. What you have after an earthly sort now belongs to God. Show that you are above a Jewish, earthly, or human feeling about it. Act on the ground that all belongs to God, and thus secure the future.

This is the grand point of our Gospel, from the transfiguration more particularly, but indeed all through. It is the slight of present treasure on earth, because we look on to the unseen, eternal, and heavenly things. It is the faith of disciples acting on the prudence of the far-seeing steward, though of course hating his injustice. The principle to act on is this, that what nature calls my own is not my own, but God's. The best use to make of it is, treating it as His, to be as generous as may be, looking out against the future. It is easy to be generous with another's goods. This is the way of faith with what flesh counts its own things. Do not count them your own, but look at and treat them as God's. Be as generous as you please: He will not take it amiss. This is evidently what our Lord insists on; and here is the application to the disciples: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail [or, it fails], they may receive you into everlasting habitations." You are not going to be on the earth long Other habitations are for ever. Sacrifice what nature calls its

own, and would always hold fast if it could. Faith counts these things God's; freely sacrifice them, in view of what shall never pass away. Then he adds the pregnant lesson — "He that is faithful in that which is least (after all it is only the least things now) is faithful also in much." Indeed there is more than this. It is not only the littleness of the present compared with the greatness of the future, but besides — "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's (I leave out the word "man's", it is really God who is meant by it), who shall give you that which is your own?" What can be of its kind a more wonderfully divine touch than this? Exactly where man counts things his own, faith admits God's claim, another's; exactly where we might count things only God's, it sees one's own. Our own things are in heaven. He that is faithful in the little now will have much entrusted then; he that knows how to use the unrighteous mammon now, whose heart is not in it, who does not value it as his treasure, on the contrary, will have then the true riches. Such is the Lord's remarkable teaching in this parable.

Next, He gives us the rich man and Lazarus; which brings all out to view, the bright and dark side, in appearance and in reality, of the future as well as of the present. See one sumptuously faring every day, attired in fine linen and purple, a man living for self; near whose door lies another, suffering, loathsome, so abjectly in want and so friendless that the dogs do the service which man had no heart for. The scene changes suddenly. The beggar dies, and angels carry him into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died, and was buried

(we hear not that Lazarus was); his funeral was as grand as his life; but in hell he lifted up his eyes, being tormented. There and then he sees the blessedness of him he had despised in presence of his own grandeur. It is the solemn light of eternity let into the world; it is God's estimate underneath outward appearances. The truth is for souls now. It is given not to think of in hades, but here; and yet we have, as most fitly winding up the tale, the earnest pleadings of the man who never before thought in his life seriously of eternal things. Hear now his anxiety for his brothers. There was no real love for souls, but a certain anxious desire for his brothers. At least one learns how real a thing his anguish was. But the Lord's comment is decisive. They had Moses and the prophets; if they heard not them, neither would they hear if one rose from the dead. What a truth, and how thoroughly about to be verified in His own rising from the dead, not to speak of another Lazarus raised in witness of His glory as the Son of God! Those who believed not Moses rejected Christ's resurrection, as they consulted to put Lazarus also to death, and sunk themselves under their own base lie (Matt 28:11-15). even to this day.

Luke 17 - 24.

The last chapter gave in the judgment of present things, another world and eternal things in good and evil, the Lord's instruction for the disciples after the dealings of grace in Luke 15, and this as the only true power of estimating the present world (that is to say, by the standard of the future — the eternal future of God. In order to complete that picture, our Lord gave a sight not only of one blessed man who had lived in what is

eternal, while experiencing the bitterness of this evil age, but of another who lived only for the present, despising God's message about eternity.

In Luke 17 there follow further lessons communicated still to the disciples; and first of all, a solemn warning as to stumbling-blocks. It is possible that offences will come; but woe to him through whom they come! Next, while there is a strong exhortation against stumbling others, there is an equally urgent call to forgive others. We are to be firm against ourselves; we are to be firm for our brethren, even where they touch ourselves. Therefore the apostles, feeling the great difficulty, as indeed it is impossible to nature so to walk, ask of the Lord to increase their faith. The Lord intimates in reply that faith grows, and even in the presence of difficulty. It seeks what belongs not to nature, but to God. On the other hand, in the midst of any answers that God may vouchsafe, and of all service rendered to Him, the admonitory word is added that when we have done all things — not when we have failed — we are unprofitable servants. Such is the true language and feeling for a disciple's heart. This closes the direct teaching here addressed to His followers (Verses 1-10.)

Our Lord is next (ver. 11-19) presented in a very characteristic way, showing that faith does not necessarily wait for a change of dispensation. He had been laying, down the duty of faith in many various forms in the early verses of this chapter. It is here shown that faith always finds its place of blessing with God and proves Him superior to forms; but God is only found in Jesus.

In the ten lepers this blessed principle is brought out clearly. The healing of the Lord was equally manifest in all; but there is a power superior to that which cleanses the body, even were it desperately leprous. The power that belongs to and comes out from God is but a small thing, in comparison with the knowledge of God Himself. This alone brings to God in spirit (as it did really by the cross of Christ). Observe, that he who exemplifies this action of divine grace was one that knew not traditional religion as the others did, that had no great privileges to boast of in comparison with the rest. It was the Samaritan in whom the Lord illustrated the power of faith. He had told the ten equally to go and show themselves to the priest; and as they went they were cleansed. One only, seeing he was cleansed, turns back, and with a loud voice glorified God. But the way in which he glorified God was not by merely ascribing the blessing to God. “He fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.”

Apparently this was disobedience; and the others could well reproach their Samaritan fellow that he was unfaithful to Jesus. But faith is always right, whatever appearances may say: I speak not now of a fancy, of course, — not of any eccentric humour or delusion too often covered over with the name of faith. Real faith which God gives is never so far wrong: and he who, instead of going on to the priest, recognizes in Jesus the power and goodness of God upon earth, (the instincts of that very faith that was of God working in his heart and carrying him back to the source of the blessing,) — he, I say, was the only one of the ten who was in the spirit, not only of the blessing but of Him who gave the blessing. And so our Lord Jesus vindicates him. “Were

there not ten cleansed?" said the Saviour; "but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Faith invariably discovers the way to give glory to God. It matters not whether it be in Abraham or in a Samaritan leper, its path is entirely outside the ken of nature, yet faith does not fail to discern it; the Lord assuredly puts His seal upon it, and grace supplies all needed strength to follow.

But this was in its principle the judgment of the Jewish system. It was the power of faith leaving Judaism to itself, mounting in Jesus to the source of both law and grace, but not putting the legal system down. This was for other hands. Faith does not destroy; it has no such commission: angels will have that province another day. But faith finds its own deliverance now, leaving those who are under the law and love not grace, to the law which condemns. For itself it discovers the blessedness of freedom from the law, yet is not lawless to God, but, on the contrary, legitimately bound (ἔννομος) to Christ, really and duly subject to Him, and so much the more because not under law. In the present case, the cleansed Samaritan in going to Jesus was very simply under grace, in the spirit that animated his heart and formed his path, as Luke the evangelist here records.

How admirably this tale is adapted to the whole tone and character of the Gospel, I need not delay to prove. It must be plain enough, I think, even to a superficial reader, that as Luke alone gives the account, so to Luke it is most especially adapted for the purpose that the Holy Ghost had in hand in this Gospel, and also in this particular context.

We have further, in our Lord's answer to the Pharisees, who demanded when the kingdom of God should come, a striking revelation, and most suitable to Luke's purpose. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is not a question of signs, wonders, or outward show. It is not that God did not accompany His message with signs. But the kingdom of God, revealed in the person of Christ, went deeper appeals to faith (not sight), and demands the Holy Ghost's action in the soul to give the sinner to see and enter it. Here it is not a question exactly of entering or seeing, as in John 3, but rather the moral character of the entrance of God's kingdom among men. It does not address itself to the senses or the mere mind of man; it carries its own evidence with it to the conscience and the heart. As being the kingdom of God, it is impossible that His kingdom should come, without adequate testimony in love to man, who is sought for it. At the same time man, having a bad conscience and a depraved heart, slights God's word as well as kingdom, and looks for that which would please himself by gratifying his feelings, mind, or even lower nature. Our Lord, however, first of all lays down this great principle: it is no question of a "lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom was actually there; for He, God's King was there. Then, after settling this moral truth which was fundamental for the soul, He turns to His disciples, and tells them that the days would come when they should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and should not see it; for the kingdom will be displayed by and by. "When 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." This is the necessary moral order of God. Jesus must first suffer; so "the sufferings of Christ," as Peter said afterwards, "and the glories that should follow." Such is the invariable method of God in dealing with a sinful world, where He brings in, not a test of man, but the effectual work of His own grace. But this presentation to faith now, as we have seen does not hinder the Lord from speaking of another day, when the kingdom of God would be manifest. Before that day of His appearing there might be a premature "Lo here! or, lo there!" The godly must not follow men's cries, but count on the Lord. He compares it to the days of Noe (that is, to the day of God's past judgment of man and his ways); then to the days of Lot.

First of all, then, we have, for the disciples, God's ways in grace, in the Son of man that first suffers, and finally will appear in power and glory. As for the world, careless indifference and enjoyment of present things will characterise the future as the past; but they will be surprised by the Lord in the midst of heedless folly. To this the Lord appends a peculiar, but not less solemn though brief word: "Remember Lot's wife! "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it." Apparently the wife of Lot was rescued by angelic power; she was certainly brought out of the doomed city; but it was only the more strikingly to be the monument of God's all-searching judgment. There she stands alone. The others perished; but she abode a pillar of salt, when Moses wrote the (morally speaking) imperishable memorial of God's hatred of a false heart, which, spite of outward deliverance, gave its affections still to a scene devoted

to destruction. And so our Lord adds here what touched, not merely the Jewish system, but the condition and doom of the world at large. He lets us know that in that night two should be in one bed; one taken, and the other left. So two women at the mill; for here we have not to do with human judgments. God will then judge the quick; and so, no matter what the association, the employment, or the sex, whether within doors or without, there can be no shelter or exemption. Two might be ever so closely knit together, but God would discriminate according to the nicety of His own discernment of their state: one should be taken, and the other left. “And they answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body. is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” Wherever there is that which is dead, and consequently offensive morally unto God, there unquestionably will His judgments fall.

But along with this we have also prayer (Luke 18), not merely as suitable to a soul’s need, and in connection with the word of God received from Jesus, which we have seen in Luke 11. Here it is prayer out of the midst of circumstances of desolation and deep trial — prayer with evil near at hand, as well as divine judgment. Consequently its ultimate bearing is in connection with the tribulation of the last days. But, at the same time, Luke never confines his view to outward facts. Hence, it is said, “He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray.” It is the more striking, because the circumstances are evidently limited; while that which He draws from them is universal. The Lord is exhorting to prayer, in view of the final trial; nevertheless, He prefaces it with a plain moral precept

on the value. of prayer at all times — “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Certainly God will not be heedless to the continual cry of His own seemingly desolate elect in their fiery trial, where all the might of man is against them; but still the duty always remains true.

Now, it is Luke alone who thus treats the matter; the great moral value attached to prayer, at the same time connected, it may be, with general circumstances of sorrow, but bearing on the circumstances of the last day. The parable is intended to give or increase confidence in the heed God pays to the prayer of distress. Spite of indifference, an unjust judge yields to the importunity of a poor widow. If a bad man so acted, not because of his hatred of the wrong done to her that was oppressed, but to get rid of being always troubled by her cries for justice — if it be so even with the unjust, would not God take up the cause of His own elect, that cried unto Him day and night? It could not but be. He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? (Verses 1-8.)

Then follows another parable of a very different character. It is not the value of persistent prayer, and the certainty of God appearing even for the weakest, no matter how apparently deserted (indeed, so much the more, because of it in His own). We have, further, the moral condition of man illustrated in two ways — a broken spirit with little light but a real sense of sin, and another soul satisfied with itself in the presence of God. “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; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.” Not that the

Pharisee represents a man who denies God, or who is not a religious man. He is religious, but such religion is the most damning thing about him. The evil is not merely his sins, but his religion: nothing more blinding to himself and other men, nothing more dishonouring to God. On the other hand, the poor publican has neither clear light nor peace, but at least he realises the commencement of all true light — he has learned enough of God to condemn himself. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He alone of the two judged things according to his little light. He judged himself truly, and, therefore, was in a moral condition to see other things aright, as God should bring them before him. There was as yet no such privilege known as a purged worshipper having no more conscience of sins. Therefore, the convicted publican is found outside, beating his breast, and standing at a distance, not so much as looking up. It was suitable that it should be so; for Christ’s work was not yet wrought, still less applied to his soul. It would have been not faith, but presumption, I do not doubt, at such a time, and under such circumstances, for him to have come nigh. All was in its season. But if God invites a believer now to draw near into the holiest of all, is it not equal presumption for that soul to quarrel with the grace of God displayed in Christ’s work of redemption, and to raise questions about its effects for itself? God may, and does, bear with the wound to His own grace; and He has His way of correcting such wrong; but there is no ground in the parable to warrant what is too often founded upon it. We owe it to Christ to resent every misinterpretation which goes to undo what He has done on the cross. The publican before us was not meant to give us a full view of the Christian state, or of the blessings of the gospel,

but of a man taught of God to feel his own nothingness as a sinner before Him; and God's estimate of him, in comparison with the man who was satisfied with his state. It is humility founded upon the sense of unworthiness, which is always right as far as it goes. (Verses 9-14.)

Next is set forth humility, founded on our littleness (ver. 15-17). Many a man is consciously unworthy, because he feels himself a sinner who has no just sense of his littleness in the presence of God. Our Lord here gives this further lesson to the disciples, and uses a child as the text. We shall find how much it was needed if we look into the Gospel of Luke.

Then we have the ruler, to whom our Lord shows that all was wrong where a soul is not brought to know that there is none good but God. Had he really known how good God is he would have soon seen God in Jesus. He saw nothing of the sort. He knew neither God nor good. He looked upon the Lord merely as good after a human fashion. If He was but a man there was no goodness in Him; it is only in God: God alone is good. If Jesus were not God, He was not good. The young ruler had no right, no just title to say, "Good Master", unless that master were God. This he saw not; and therefore, the Lord proves him, and searches the ground of his heart, and demonstrates that after all he valued the world more than God and eternal life. This he had never suspected in himself before. He loved his natural position; he loved to be a ruler, though a young one; he loved his possessions; he loved what he had of present advantages in the world. He really clave to all these things without knowing it himself. The Lord, therefore calls upon him to give them up, and follow Him. He

thought there was no demand of goodness but what he was able to meet; but the trial was too much for him. Man was not good — God only. Jesus, who was God, had given up beyond all comparison more, yea, infinitely.

What had He not given up, and for whom? He was God, and proved it not least in a self-abnegation truly divine. (Verses 18 - 25.)

Then we have the hearers and disciples disclosing their thoughts. They began to claim something of credit for what they had given up. The Lord admits that there is no abandonment of faith but what will meet with a most adequate remembrance from the Lord another day.

But, at the same time (verses 31-34), He takes unto Him the twelve and says, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.” This is what He was looking for, whatever they were. “For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again; and they understood none of these things. And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” It is an important lesson, and not the first time we find it in Luke, and, indeed, in other Gospels also. Nor can it be too often repeated, that lack of intelligence in Scripture does not depend upon the obscurity of the language, but because the will does not like the truth that is taught. This is the reason why difficulties are felt and abound. When a man is made willing to receive the truth, his eye is single and his whole body full of light. The will is the real hindrance. The mind will be clear, if the conscience

and the heart be set right. Where, on the contrary, God breaks down the believer, and sets him free in the liberty wherewith the Son makes free, the conscience is purged, and the heart turned towards Himself. All then becomes right: he is brought into the light of God; he sees light in God's light. Was this the condition of the disciples as yet? Were they not still cleaving to their own cherished expectations of Messiah, and an earthly kingdom? They could not understand Him, no matter how plain the words employed. The hardness of His saying lay not in any lack of perspicuity. Never man spake as this man, His enemies themselves being judges; neither was it from any defect in their natural understanding that the disciples were thus slow. The state of the heart, as ever, was in question; the will was at fault, even though they were regenerate. It was their reluctance to receive what Jesus taught that made the difficulty; and it is the same thing still with believers, as with others.

In verse 35 we enter on the closing section of all the historical Gospels, as is well known, that is to say, the entrance into Jerusalem from Jericho. Only there is a difficulty here to some — that Luke appears to contradict what we have in the other accounts of this part of Christ's progress. "It came to pass, that as he came nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging." From the other Gospels we know it was when He went out of Jericho, not when He came in. The truth is, that our English version, excellent as it is, goes a little beyond the word of Luke; for our evangelist does not say "When he was come nigh unto Jericho," but "when he was nigh." It is not necessarily a question of coming near, but simply of being in the neighbourhood.

The utmost which can or ought to be allowed is, that if the context so required, it might bear the translation (a paraphrase rather) of coming nigh; but this case demands the very reverse. It is evident, whether you go into a place or whether you come out of it, you are equally nigh on one side of the town or on the other. The truth is, that Luke merely states the fact of vicinity here. Further, we know that just as Matthew, for his design, so he displaces facts historically for the purpose of giving a more forcible moral picture of the truth in hand. I have little doubt that in this case the reason for putting the blind man here rather than in leaving, the town was, that for Jericho He reserved the wonderful call of Zaccheus, with the object of bringing that tale of grace, characteristic of His first-advent, into juxtaposition with the question and parable of the kingdom, which illustrated His second advent; for immediately afterwards we have His correction of the disciples, thoughts, that the kingdom of God was immediately going to appear; because He was going up to Jerusalem. They expected that He was going to take the throne of David at once. Accordingly, Luke puts together those two features — the grace that illustrates His first coming, and the real nature of the second coming of Christ, as far as regards the appearing of God's kingdom. Now, had the story of the blind man healed at Jericho been left for its historical place, it would have cut the thread of these two circumstances. There is, therefore, in this, as it appears to me, an ample and divine reason why the Spirit of God led the writer to present the cure of the blind man as we find it. But then he does not say what the English version makes him say, "As he was come nigh," but simply, "When he was nigh to Jericho," leaving it open to other Scriptures to define

the time with more precision. He only states that it was while the Lord was in the neighbourhood. The other Gospels positively tell us it was as He went out. Clearly, therefore, we must interpret the general language of Luke by the exacter marks of the time and place of those who declare it was as He was going out. Nothing can be simpler. The healing of the blind man was a kind of final testimony that Messiah was there. He was coming in the way, not of the power that once overthrew Jericho, but of grace that showed and could meet the real condition of Israel. They were blind. Had they possessed the faith only to cry to Messiah about their blindness, He was therewith power and willingness to heal them. There was none but a blind man or two to own real need, but our Lord at least healed all who cried. (Verses 35-43.)

Then, as He entered Jericho, Zaccheus, the chief of the tax-gatherers, was mightily stirred with the desire to see this wondrous man, the Son of man. Hence he lets nothing stand in the way. Neither personal deficiency, nor the crowd that was there, is allowed to hinder his intense purpose of heart to see the Lord Jesus. He therefore climbs up a sycamore tree by the way; and Jesus knowing well the desire of Zaccheus, and the faith that was at work there however feebly, at once, to his joy and astonishment, invites Himself to his house. "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." All fell to murmuring. It was the same tale at the end as at the beginning. "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." He had been really a

conscientious man. He was a man thus characterised; for it is no promise of what he is going to do, but he mentions that which was no doubt a fact about himself at that very moment. He was what men call a just and good man, yet a chief tax-gatherer and a wealthy one, though they be hard things to put together. Here was a tax-gatherer who, if through in cautiousness or any defect guilty of wrong to another, needed no pressure to restore fourfold. Such was his habit. Our Lord, however, cuts it all short. As a matter of human righteousness it was well; it was the proof that Zaccheus exercised himself as a man to have a conscience void offence in his own way. Nor is this out of keeping with the tenor of Luke's Gospel, as, indeed, it is only here that we have the story at all. Our Lord, however, shows that it was not the time to think or speak of such matters. "This day is salvation come to this house, inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." How infinite the blessing! Was it a fitting time for speaking of himself? It was not a question of man's walking righteously, or of talking about it. In truth, man was lost; but the Son of man was there to bear his burden. This great and glorious fact superseded all others. Whatever there had been working in him at any time all was now swallowed up in the presence of the Son of man seeking and saving the lost. What can give us amore vivid, true, and blessed representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His first coming with the grace of God that brings salvation? (Luke 19:1-10.)

Immediately after (and, if I mistake not, expressly put in close conjunction with this) is the parable of the nobleman who goes into a far country to receive for

himself a kingdom, and to return. They were all wrong therefore, in looking for the kingdom of God immediately to appear. Not so. Christ was going away to heaven to receive the kingdom from God there — not about to take it from man now and in this world. It is evidently, therefore, a picture of the Lord's return at the second advent, after having received a kingdom. It was not a question of human willingness or power, but of receiving from God. But then, further, He shows that meanwhile His servants are called to occupy themselves till he come. He called His ten servants, and delivered to them ten pounds; and said unto them, "Occupy till I come." Then we find another picture — His citizens hating Him; for nothing can be more elaborate than this parable. The Lord's relation to the kingdom at the second advent is contrasted with the grace that flows out in the former part of the chapter. This is the main subject with which the parable opens. Next, we have the place of the servants responsible to use what the Lord gives. Such is another great point shown out here. It is not, as in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord giving different gifts to different servants, which is equally true; but here it is the moral test of the servants carried out by each having the same sum. This proves yet more than in the other case how far they laboured. They started with similar advantages. What was the result? Meanwhile hatred became apparent in the citizens, who represent the unbelieving Jews settled down in the earth. "When he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those 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 mina hath gained ten minas;" and so with the other; and then we

hear of the one who says, “Lord, behold, here is thy mina, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee.” There was no confidence in His grace. The consequence is, that, treating the Lord as a froward man, he finds Him froward. Unbelief finds its own response as truly as faith does. As “it is unto thee according to thy faith,” so alas! the converse proves true. It is to man according to his unbelief.

Further, we have a remarkable difference in the rewards here. It is not, “Enter into the joy of thy Lord;” but one receives ten cities, another five, and so on. He that was fearful and unbelieving, on the contrary, has his mina taken from him. Again, then enemies are brought forward. The unfaithful servant is not called an enemy, though, no doubt, he was no friend of the Son, and dealt with righteously. But the open adversaries are called into the scene; and as the Lord here pronounces those men His enemies which would not:that He should reign over them, He says, “Bring them hither, and slay them before me.” Thus the parable is a very complete sketch of the general results of the Lord’s second advent for the citizens of the world, as well as of the occupation and reward of the servants who serve Him faithfully meanwhile. (Verses 11-27.)

Next, we have the entrance into Jerusalem. We need not dwell on the scene of the riding in on the colt; but that which is peculiar to Luke claims our attention for a moment. “And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen: saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the

highest."(Ver. 37, 38.) Thus the Spirit of God works to give them a step, and a great step, in divine intelligence beyond the song of the angels at the beginning. What they justly sang at the birth of Jesus was, "Peace on earth: good will that is, God's good will in men," ushered in by glory to God in the highest. Here we have a signal change or converse. "Glory in the highest" is the result, not the introduction; and instead of "peace on earth," (which will, no doubt, be the fruit by and by, as it is according to God's mind, the anticipation from the beginning,) the disciples meanwhile and most appropriately, sing, "Peace in heaven." It was not a question of peace on earth now. The reason was manifest: the earth was unready, was about to judge unjustly, and to be judged. Jesus was on the very point of being cast out and cut off. He was really in heart thoroughly rejected already; but He was shortly to enter on other sufferings, even to the death of the cross. The effect, then, of that which was imminent was not peace for the earth yet, but peace in heaven most assuredly; and therefore we can comprehend how the Lord guided by His Spirit the song of the disciples at the close just as much as at the beginning; that of the angels expressed the general idea of God's purposes — the moral effects to spring from the death of the incarnate Son.

After this we hear the murmuring Pharisees rebuked, who would have had the disciples rebuked for their song: if they had not sung it, the stones must have cried out; and the Lord vindicates the blameless (Ver. 39, 40.)

Then follows that most touching scene, peculiar to and characteristic of Luke — Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. It was not at the grave of the one He loved, though about to call from the grave. The weeping in John is in

the presence of death, which had touched Lazarus. It is therefore infinitely more personal, though it be also the wondrous sight of One who, coming, with the consciousness of divine power to banish death and bring life into the scene, yet in grace nevertheless did not one whit the less, but the more, feel the power of death as no mere man ever felt, yet as none but a real man could feel. There never was any one that had such a sense of death before as Jesus, just because He was life, the energy of which, combined with perfect; love, made the power of death to be so sensible. Death does not feel death, but life did. Therefore He that was (and not merely had) life, as no one else, weeps in the presence of death, groaning, in spirit at the grave. His having power to banish death weakened His sense of it in no respect. If poor dying man felt it somewhat, the Lord made flesh, the God-man, entered into it in spirit the more because He was God, though man. But here we have another scene, His weeping over that very city that was about to cast Him out and crucify Him. Oh it is a truth for us to treasure in our hearts — His weeping in divine grace over guilty Jerusalem, forsaking its own mercies, rejecting its own Saviour — the Lord God. Its desolation He predicts, and destruction, because the time of its visitation was unknown. (Verses 41-44.) His visit to the temple and its cleansing are mentioned summarily; as also His teaching there daily the chiefs of priest and people, With their desire to destroy Him but hardly knowing how, for all the people hung on Him to hear. In Luke 20 we have the various classes of religionists and worldly men trooping one after another, hoping somehow to ensnare or accuse the Lord of glory. Each of them falls into the trap which they had made for Him. Accordingly they do but discover and condemn

themselves. We have the priests with their question of authority (ver. 1-8), then the people hearing the history of God's dealings with them, and their moral condition fully brought out. (Verses 9-19.) We have further the crafty spies, hired by the chief priests and scribes, that feigned themselves just, and thought to take hold of His words, and embroil Him with the earthly powers. (Verses 20-26.)

We have, after these, the Sadducees denying the resurrection. (Verses 27-38.) But here we may pause for a moment; for there are special and profoundly instructive touches peculiar to Luke. More particularly remark this — that he alone, of all the evangelists, here characterizes men, in the activities of this life, as "the children of this world," or age. They are persons who live merely for the present. "The children of this world [age] marry, and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world [age], and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels." In the resurrection state there will be no such relations. The difficulty existed for, or rather was made by, unbelief only. Indeed, what else can incredulity ever pretend to? It imagines difficulties, and nowhere so much as in the most certain truth of God. The resurrection is the great truth to which all things turn — which the Lord has shown in its final form, too, in His own person now raised from the dead, then just about to follow. This truth was combated and refused by the most active sect among the Jews at that time, the most intellectual and the best informed naturally. These were the persons who most of all set themselves against it.

But our Lord brings in another remarkable point here. Not only is God not the God of the dead, but of the living; but “all live unto him.” (Ver. 38.) Two great truths are here present — living unto God after death, and future resurrection, when Jesus comes and brings in the new age. This was especially of value for Gentiles, because it was one of the great problems for the heathen mind, whether the soul existed after death, not to speak of the resurrection of the body. Naturally the Jews, save the unbelieving portion of them, looked for resurrection; but for the Gentiles the Spirit of God gives us our Lord’s answer to the Sadducees, both proving the resurrection which is common to all the Gospels, and bringing in the living, of dead men in the separate state. It peculiarly fell within the domain of Luke.

This truth is not confined to the present portion of our Gospel. We have similar teaching elsewhere. Does not the account of the rich man and Lazarus intimate the same thing? Yea, more; not only the existence of the soul separate from the body, after death, of course) but also blessedness and misery at once. They are not absolutely dependent on the resurrection. Besides, there is the final publicly adjudicated portion of misery for body and soul before the great white throne. But, in Luke 16, blessedness and misery at once are felt by the soul in the dissolution of the link with the body. The figures, no doubt, are taken, as they must be, from the body. Thus we find the desire for cooling of the tongue, which men of speculative mind use to prove that it was the time of being clothed with a real body. Nothing of the sort. The Spirit of God speaks to be understood, and (if He is to be understood by men) He must deign to use language adapted to our comprehension. He cannot give us the

understanding of a state which we have never experienced, unless it be by figures taken from the present state. A similar truth appears also later on in the case of the converted thief. The point there is just the same — immediate blessedness, and not merely when the body is raised from the dead by and by. That is what he looked for when he sought to be remembered, when Jesus comes in His kingdom. But the Lord adds more — immediate blessedness now: “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Depend upon it, we cannot be too stringent in maintaining, the importance both of the resurrection, and of the immediate blessedness or misery of the soul separate from the body before the resurrection. To give up the reality of the soul’s existence in either misery or blessedness at once is only a stepping-stone to materialism; and materialism is but a prelude to giving up both the truth and the grace of God, and all the awful reality of man’s sin and Satan’s power. Materialism always is essentially infidel, though far from being, the only form of infidelity.

Towards the end of the chapter (ver. 39-44) our Lord puts the great question of His own person and the position He was just going to take not on the throne of David but on the throne of God. Was not He Himself, David’s Son owned as his Lord by David? On the person and position of Christ depends the whole of Christianity. Judaism, lowering the person, sees not or denies the position. Christianity is based not on the work only but on the glory of the person and place of Him who is glorified in God. He takes that place as man. He who humbled Himself as man in suffering is exalted as man to the glory of God on high.

Then follows the judgment — but very briefly — on the scribes; and in contrast With their selfish hypocrisy, (“which devour widows’ houses and for a show make long prayers”) the Lord’s estimate of real devotedness is the widow’s mites. (Luke 21:1-4.) Mark notices it as the service of faith and so brings it into his Gospel of service. Luke shows it as a question of the heart’s state and trust in God. It fell therefore, within the domain of these two.

We have after this the hearts of the disciples proved to be still earthly and Jewish; but the Lord brings before them not the glory and beauty yet in store for Jerusalem but it is judgment specially on the temple. (Verses 5-36.) At the same time we have particulars which demonstrate the weighty difference between this description of the judgment of the Jews and Jerusalem, and mark it off from the accounts of either Matthew or Mark. Observe more especially this, that here the Lord Jesus brings before us a very direct and immediate picture of the destruction of Jerusalem that was then imminent. Matthew passes by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and fixes attention upon that which will take place in the end of the age. Luke gives us this last also — closes, at any rate, with the future crisis; but the main point is the central portion of Luke is to point out the destruction then actually at hand as a distinct state of things and time from the circumstances of the Son of man’s day. This is made perfectly plain to any one who considers it patiently. He says, “When ye shall sec Jerusalem, — not “the abomination of desolation” (not a word about it here for it belongs to the last days exclusively; but “when ye shall see Jerusalem) — compassed with armies, then know that the desolation

thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Not a word about the great tribulation such as never was since time was; it is simply "days of vengeance." "These be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled." There is retributive severity, but not a sign appears of its being anything unparalleled. "There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." So there was. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations." This is a matter of fact description of what was really fulfilled to the letter in the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus. Thus there is no exaggerated description. The pretence of commentators, who rush to hyperbole as a cover for their misapplication, is cut off. Not that I allow it any more in Matthew. The only reason why men have so spoken of that evangelist is because they turn aside his prophecy of the end of the age to that which has been already accomplished. When the last days come, be assured they will learn too late that there is no hyperbole with God or His word.

And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Not only is there the sack of the city, the slaughter and captivity of the people, but continual occupation by their enemies till the termination of the period God allows the nations to have the supremacy over Israel. These times are going on now. Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles for many centuries as every one knows, throughout mediaeval and modern history. It seems particularly thus expressed in order not to continue the phrase to the Romans or previous imperial powers from Babylon downwards. Thus at the present time the Turks

are the actual holders of it. The fact is notorious, that Jerusalem has been in the hands of many masters who have dealt hardly with the Jews. So He closes this matter.

Next, He introduces the last days. And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars. There was not a word of all this when He spoke of the siege and capture of the city under Titus. After the Gentile domination is over (which clearly it is not yet), there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and distress of nations; men's hearts failing them forfear; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken and then shall they see — not when the Romans of old took the city but, in the future crisis, when these astonishing tokens, heavenly and earthly, are given by God — then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

He gives then a parable but not of the fig tree only: this would not be suitable to the largeness of Luke's scope. "Behold the fig-tree and all the trees." The difference between Luke and the others is this — not that you have not the Jewish portion in his Gospel but that, moreover all the Gentiles are brought in. How perfect it all is! If it be but a parabolic description, the evangelist for the Gentiles not only gives the fig tree which is in Matthew, but the Gentile trees which are heard of nowhere else. That one tree notoriously applies to the Jews as a nation; the other figure ("all the trees") adds the rest, so as to be universal.

Then the Lord adds some moral considerations for the heart: “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 upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Need it be remarked here that this again falls in with our evangelist beyond all others? So too the brief picture of His daily occupation in the temple and of His nights apart at Olivet which in no way precluded the people from coming to hear early in the morning. What unwearied travail of love!

In Luke 22 we see our Lord with the disciples not now as a prophet, but about to become a sacrifice meanwhile giving them the sweetest pledge of His love. On the other hand, there is the hatred of man, the weakness of the disciples, the falsehood of Peter, the treachery of Judas, the subtlety and terrors of the enemy who had the power of death. The day of unleavened bread comes on, and the passover must be killed; and Peter and John go to prepare it. According to the Lord’s word, the place was given. “And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 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.” (14-16.) It was the last act of communion of Christ with them. He eats with them: He will not drink. Another cup was before Him. As for this cup, they were to take it, and divide it among themselves. It was not the Lord’s Supper, but the paschal cup. He was about to drink of a far different cup, which His Father would give Him — the anti-type of the passover, and the basis of the

Lord’s Supper. But as to the cup before them, He says, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” It was about to come morally; for Luke holds to that great principle — the kingdom of God was about to be established in what you may call the Christian system. The phrase in Luke does not import some future dispensation or state of things about to be above or below, in visible power, but an imminent coming of God’s kingdom, really and truly here. The other Gospels connect it with the future; Luke speaks of what was to be made good shortly — “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

Meanwhile, He gives them also a new thing. (19, 20.) He took bread with thanksgiving, brake it, and gave to them, saving, “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant1 of my blood, which is shed for you.” It was not the point with Luke to say “for many,” while this was most appropriate in the Gospel of Matthew, because it intimates the extending of the efficacy of Christ’s blood beyond the Jew. The old covenant which condemned was limited. The new covenant (or, rather, the blood of the rejected Christ, the Son of man, on which it was based) refused such narrow barriers. In Luke the same thing, occurs here, as we said applied to His account of the sermon on the mount. It is more personal, and hence deals more closely with the heart and conscience. How many a man acknowledges justification by faith in a general sense, who, the moment you make it personal, would shrink from taking the place of a justified man, as if this would be too much for God to give him! But, in truth it is impossible to go on with God aright, until the

personal question is settled by divine grace. So the Lord here settles it for them personally. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.”

“And truly the Son of man goeth,..... but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!” An awful moral contrast rises before the spirit of the Saviour. Thus He felt it: as it is said elsewhere, “He was troubled.” There is much vagueness in minds as to this merging all in the atonement, to the great detriment of their distinctness even in holding the atonement itself. To me it is a grievous thing, this denial practically of a large part of the sufferings of Christ. Pushed out, it rests on a want of faith in the real humanity of the Lord. I take for granted now that there is a firm hold of His bearing God’s wrath on the cross. But even where that is maintained in a general way, at least, it is an awful thing to deny any part of His moral glory; and what is it but denying, this, to shut out those real sufferings which prove the extent and character of His humiliation, exalt and endear Himself in our eyes, and issue in the richest streams of comfort for His saints, who can afford to lose none of His sympathy?

Now, the Lord Jesus did feel the traitor’s heartless ways (and we may learn it yet more from Psalm 109.) Surely also we ought to feel it, instead of merely treating it as a thing, that must be, and which Scripture prepares us for, or which God’s goodness turns to gracious ends. All true enough; but are these the platitudes that content us before His troubled spirit? Or is not the sense of His sorrow to fill the heart in presence of this ineffable love, which endured all things for the elect’s sake? Yea, it was from all: our Lord has to meet shame in those He loved best. “They began to enquire among themselves which

of them it was that should do this thing." (Ver. 23.) There was honesty in these hearts; but what ignorance! what unbrokenness of self! "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest." Other evangelists, as well as Luke, mention that, when He was in the midst of His miracles and teaching, they were full of their unseemly rivalry; Luke mentions it where it was beyond comparison most painful and humiliating — in presence of the communion of His body and His blood, and when they had just heard of the presence of the traitor in their midst, who was offering to sell their Master for thirty pieces of silver! "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." What grace! what a pattern! But forget not the warning. The patronizing, of the lordly benefactor has no place in Christ's mind for His followers. To serve was the Lord's place: may we prize it! (Verses 24-27.)

Another touching, and beautiful trait in our Lord's dealing is here worthy of remark. He tells the disciples that it was they who had continued with Him in His temptations. In Matthew and Mark, and even in John, their forsaking of Christ is very conspicuous a little later. Luke alone tells how graciously He noticed their perseverance with Himself in His temptations. Both, of course, were perfectly true. In Luke it was the reckoning of grace. It was really the Lord who had deigned to

continue with them, and had sustained their faltering steps; but He could say, “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.” It is always thus in grace. Matthew and Mark tell us the sad truth that, when He needed the disciples most, they all forsook Him and fled. His rejection was complete; and Old Testament Scripture was amply fulfilled. But, in view of the Gentile calling, New Testament grace has here a happier task.

Again, it is a scene peculiar to Luke, that, in the presence of the Saviour’s death, Satan sifts one of the chief followers that belonged to the Saviour. But the Lord turns the sifting, and even the downfall of the saint to ultimate and great blessing not for that soul only but for others. How mighty, and wise, and good the ways of grace! not only its reckoning, but its experiences and its end! It was Simon that furnished the material. “Simon, Simon,” says the Lord, “Satan hath desired [demanded] to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Simon, sadly ignorant of himself, is full of bold promises to go to prison or to death; but, says the Lord, “Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.” All the evangelists record the fall; Luke alone records Christ’s gracious prayer for, and purpose in, his restoration.

Then comes in another communication of our Saviour not more interesting than full of instruction. It is the contrast of the condition of the disciples during His

ministry, and that which must be now that He was going to die. It was indeed concurrent with a change of vast import for Himself — not awaiting His death, but in many respects beginning before it. The sense of His rejection and His approaching death not only pressed on the Saviour's spirit, but more or less also affects the disciples, who were under the pressure especially of what was done by men. "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? 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 [or], [rather, lawlessness — ἀνόμων]: 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." It is not surprising that the disciples at that time failed to seize His meaning. Though all the rest of His teaching might have taught them better, they took His words in a material sense, and conceived that He urged them to take a literal sword. It is evident He took up the figure of a sword and purse to show, that instead of counting any more on miraculous resources, they must in future use, according to the measure of their personal faith, whatever God furnished them with; that is, they must employ natural things for the Lord, instead of being, as hitherto, shielded by supernatural power in the midst of their foes. We find them afterwards using miracles; but it was for others. In their earlier mission it was never needed. No blow fell upon them. No prison closed its doors upon one of the twelve, or of the seventy. They traversed the length and breadth of the land, everywhere bearing their plain, solemn

testimony, ever guarded by God's power: just like their Master Himself. We see how truly miraculous this power was apart from any exertion of it on their own behalf. But now all was to change; and the disciple must be as his Master. Jesus was going to suffer. They must make up their minds to the same thing. Of course, they are not excluded from but exhorted to, the looking up to God, and using faithfully whatever means the Lord gave them.

This, I apprehend, is the clear meaning of His altered language here. The Messiah was about to be openly cut off. The arm that had upheld them, and the shield that had been over them, are removed. So it was with Him. He was now about to face death; first in spirit, then in fact. Such was ever His way. Everything was in that order. He was surprised by nothing. He was not like a mere man who waited till he could not help following, and then went in steel through the trouble. This may be the way of men, to avoid what they can, and think as little as possible of what is painful and disagreeable. It may even be according to men's ideas of a hero, but it is not the truth of Christ. On the contrary, though the true God, He was a true man, and a holy sufferer, having a heart that felt every thing: this is the truth of Christ as man. Therefore He takes all from God, and feels all, as it really was for His glory.

Accordingly our Saviour, at the mount of Olives, (ver. 39-46) shows how true what I have just asserted is; for there it is that He is found first of all telling them to pray, lest they should enter into temptation. Temptation may come and test the heart; but our entering into it is quite another thing. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a

stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Still farther to show its character, and His unimpeachable relation to God, as well as how really He was a suffering man, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, 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." So difficult is the path of faith for men in one direction or another, that (in earlier days when, in the midst of adversaries and full of superstition, men yet clung to the stainless honour of the Son of God)the timid orthodox ventured on the bold step of expunging verses 44, 45; for what, after all, is so adventurous as this Uzzah-like anxiety for the ark of God? They thought it impossible that the Lord Jesus could suffer thus. Little did they estimate the depth unfathomable of the cross, when God hid His face from Him. Had they discerned this better, and been simple in the faith of His real manhood, and held to the written word about His sufferings on and before the cross, they had not been so easily stumbled. But they were not simple, understood in the Scriptures, and accordingly dared, some to stigmatize these verses, others to strike them out. In modern days they manage things both more prudently and more effectually. They may not obelize or obliterate; but they do not believe them. Men pass them over as if there was nothing for the soul in them, as if the Saviour Son of God condescended to a show, a pantomime, instead of enduring the severest conflict and anguish that ever had been the portion of a human heart on this earth. Never was any thing but reality in Jesus; but if in the days of His flesh there was one passage more affecting than

another, any thing which more than another presents to us His sorrows clearly, graphically and with solemn instruction for us, anything for God Himself above all glorifying (the cross alone excepted) it was this very scene where Jesus avoids and wards off no suffering, but bends to every stroke, (and what was He spared?) seeing God's hand in all.

Now their hour was come, and the power of darkness. Before this they could not lay hands upon Him; but now, the active work done, and Himself definitively refused, Jesus accepts all humiliation, shame, and suffering. But he does not see man merely. He does not look at the devil, or Jews, or Gentiles. He feels all man did and said, and owns His Father. He knew full well that His Father could have hindered every pang had He been so pleased — could have turned Israel's heart — could have broken the nations. But now the Jew is left to abhor Him, the Gentile to despise and crucify Him. Against the holy servant Jesus whom God had anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathering together; but was it not to do whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel determined before to be done? He saw God His Father above and behind all the secondary instruments, and bowed and blessed, even while He prayed with blood-sweat. He would erect no barricade of miracles to shelter Himself. To weigh before God such circumstances as then surrounded Jesus, to anticipate in His presence what was coming, did not lessen, but rather increased the depth of all; and so we find Him praying earnestly to His Father that, if it were possible, the cup should pass away from Him. But it was not possible; and so He adds, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Both

were perfect. It would have been hardness, not love, had the cup been treated as a light thing: but this could never be with Jesus. It was part of the very perfection of Jesus that he felt and deprecated the awful cup. For what was in that cup? The wrath of God. How could He wish for the wrath of God? It was right to deprecate it: it was like Jesus, notwithstanding, to say, “Thy will be done.” Both the deprecation and the acceptance were thoroughly perfect — both equally in their due place and season. Who fails to see it, or would harbour a doubt, that knows who Jesus was, and what the glory of His person? It is not a question, however, of His merely being God; and you destroy the value of the suffering if you do not give full place to His humanity. Not that His Godhead ever made His suffering less; else the result would have been some nondescript estate which was neither Godhead nor manhood, but somewhat made up of both. It was an early error to suppose an impassible Christ. There is no worse invention against the truth, unless it be the lie which denies Him to be God the Son. An unsuffering impassible Christ is of Satan, not the true God and eternal life. It is a false chimera of the enemy. Be assured, that if the suffering be so real and precious to God, it is a dangerous thing to pare down, fritter away, or deny any part of it. For us it is the question of what God tells us in His word of the sufferings of Christ — not whether we understand all He says about them. Be assured that we know but in part, and have much to learn, especially of that which does not touch our own immediate necessities; but there is one thing we are always responsible for and that is, to submit to God, to believe Him, even though we enter very little into the depths of all that He has written for us of Jesus.

Only this I would add. It does not become such as say they do not understand this or that, to take the place of being judges. It is intelligible that those who know should judge; not so, as it appears to me, that people should take the place of judging who confessedly do not know. It were wise, not to say becoming humility, to wait and learn.

Next we see Judas, who approaches and kisses Christ: the Lord of glory is betrayed by the apostle. The final scene comes on apace; and not more surely, according to the word of Christ, the murderous malice of the priests, than the energy of Peter, so fatal, to himself, who could not face the difficulty into which his self-confidence carried him. He that could not pray with his Master, but slept in the garden, breaks down without his Master before a servant girl. The rest fled. John tells the tale of his own shame, with Peter's. The scene is complete. There is not a witness for Jesus now. He is alone. Man has it apparently all his own way, in mockery, blows, and blasphemy; but yet he is only accomplishing the will, the purpose, and the grace of God. (Ver. 63-65.) The chapter closes with Jesus before the council of elders, chief priests, and scribes. "Art thou the Christ?" was too late now: they had proved that they would not believe. From henceforth [not] ["hereafter,'' as in the A.V.] shall the Son of man be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. It is the well-known transition, we see everywhere, on the rejection of the Messiah. "Art thou then the Son of God?" said they all. He owns to the truth; and they need no more to condemn Him.

In Luke 23 Jesus is found not before Pilate only, but Herod; and the two men who heretofore hated each other are here reconciled, now that it is a question of

rejecting Jesus. It is only Luke who gives us this touch. What a league of peace over the rejection of the Saviour! At any rate the scorning of Jesus proceeds; and Pilate, carried away against his conscience by the will of the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required. Jesus is led away to the cross, and Simon is compelled to bear it after Jesus; for now man shows his needless cruelty in every form The women that were there lament with the crowd after Jesus: there was much of human feeling in this, though not faith or real love. Why not lament for themselves; for in truth there were days of sorrow coming, when they should say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare; and the paps that never gave suck.” “Then they shall 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?” Jesus was the green tree; and if Jesus was so treated, what should be their fate, as set forth fully by that dry tree, which was Israel? Undoubtedly Israel ought to have been the green tree of promise; but it was only a dry tree waiting, for judgment. But Jesus, the green tree(where there was all the vigour of holy ways and obedience), was far from honour, and now on His way to the cross. Such was man, to whom He had been delivered! What would be God’s judgment of man? (Verses 27-31.)

And they crucified Jesus between two malefactors — the one on the right hand, and the other on the left and Jesus says, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” They part His raiment, and cast lots for it. The people behold, the rulers deride, and the soldiers mock; but a superscription was written over Him in

Greek, and Roman, and Hebrew letters — This is the King of the Jews. (Verses 32-38.)

Jesus works the great work of salvation in the heart of one of the malefactors. It was a real work within: it was not merely a work ever so perfectly done outside. Most assuredly there never was a soul saved but the work was done for him — done alone by Jesus — He alone suffering, the sinner saved. But where the heart knows the work done for the soul, there is a work done in that very soul. So it was here: and it is of great importance that those who maintain the work for, should equally maintain the work in. Even in this case, where the effect was produced rapidly, the Spirit of God has given us the great moral traits of it. First of all appears a hatred of sin in the fear of God; then the repentant heart rebukes the shameless evil of his fellow, who feels that it is, least of all, a time thus to sin boldly in the presence of death, and of God's judgment. "We indeed justly; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Evidently there was more than righteousness here. There was a sense of grace, as well as of sin, and sensitiveness about God's will. There was delight in "this man," Jesus, whose holiness made such an impression, that the poor felon, now a believer, could challenge all the world, and feel no more doubt of the Lord's blameless life than if he had witnessed it all through. How great is the simplicity and assurance of faith! Who was he that could correct the judgment of priests or governor? "This man hath done nothing amiss." It was a crucified robber! He forgot Himself in Christ the Lord thus vindicated. Then he turns to Jesus, and says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Yes! and Jesus will remember — could not put Him aside. He never cast out either a soul that came

to Him, or a prayer that was founded on His glory, and desired association with Him. It could not be. He came down to associate with the poorest and feeblest on earth. He is now gone on high to associate with Himself there those who were once, possibly, the worst on the earth, now with Himself above, cleansed of course (need we say it?) — cleansed by water and blood. And so with this soul whom grace had now touched. “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” What more convincing proof that the man had not an anxiety about his sins? for if he had, he would, of course, have put it forward. He would have said, “Lord, do not remember my sins.” Nothing of the sort was uttered, but “Lord, remember me.” What would Christ’s kingdom be to him, if his sins were not blotted out? He so counted on His grace, that no doubt or question remained, and he asks to be remembered by Jesus at His advent, ascribing the kingdom to Him who was hanging on the cross. He was right; and Jesus replies with ineffable grace, and according to that style so worthy of God (compare Psalm 132), which not only answers the prayer of faith, but invariably surpasses it. God must be God in His recognition of faith, as everywhere else. We saw on the mount of transfiguration that there is a blessedness beyond that of the kingdom, where government is not in question. This is not the theme predicted by prophets, but a glory which the person of Jesus alone can account for, and His grace alone introduce to. So here Jesus says to the converted robber, “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise” — at once, by virtue of His blood, the companion of Christ in the garden of divine joy and delight. (Verses 39-43.)

Then the Spirit of God notices the darkness which reigned, and not merely in the lower air around the earth; for the sun was darkened, the splendid orb of natural light, which rules the day. The veil of the temple, too, which characterized the whole system of the Jewish religion, was rent from top to bottom. This was not the effect of an earthquake, nor of other physical causes. The natural light disappeared, and Judaism vanished, that a new and true light might shine, making him who saw it free of the holiest of all. Luke groups the external facts together, and leaves the Lord's death more alone with its moral adjuncts.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." Here there is no cry to God in the sense of being forsaken, when His soul was made an offering for sin. This was given appropriately by Matthew and Mark. Nor is it as the consciously divine person, the Son, pronouncing the work finished for which He had come. It is the ever perfect man, Christ Jesus, with unwavering confidence committing His spirit into His Father's keeping. (Compare Psalms 16, 31) It was the atoning One. On the cross, and nowhere else, was expiation effected; there was His blood shed; there His death, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet knew what it was to have the face of God hid from Him in judgment of sin — our sin. But the words here are no expression of His suffering, as thus abandoned and atoning, but of the peaceful departure of His spirit, as man, into the hands of God the Father. He is drinking the cup in Matthew and Mark; He, the true, but rejected Messiah, the faithful servant, now suffering for sin, who had laboured in grace here below. But here

the Saviour is viewed in His absolute dependence and trust in Him, whom He had set before Him, as in life always, so with equal affiance of heart in death. It was the province of John to show Him even then above all circumstances in personal glory. It is beyond all controversy, that here the human side of Christ's death is more vividly portrayed than in any of the Gospels — perfect, but human; just as in John it is the divine side, though care is taken to prove particularly there its reality, as well as the witness of its efficacy for sinful man. The consistency of this with all we have seen in Luke, from first to last, is unquestionable: Son of God — of the Highest, as of David also; but He is emphatically, and in every detail, the Son of man.

Remark here the absence of a crowd of circumstances of the deepest interest to the Jew, when grace makes him meek, and obedient in heart — of solemn warning to him, whatever the unbelief which shuts up his heart and seals his ears, to the truth Here is no dream and message from Pilate's wife; here no awful episode of Judas. In remorse and despair, casting the price of innocent blood into the very sanctuary, and going away to hang himself; here no imprecation of His blood on them and on their children; here no detail of the guilty people's unconscious accomplishment of the living oracles of God in the Psalms and Prophets; nor here any allusion to the earthquake, and the rent rocks, and opened graves, or the subsequent appearing of risen saints to many in the holy city. All this has its due place in the Gospel for the circumcision. Luke tells us what had the largest bearing on the Gentiles, on the heart, its wants, and its affections. We see the people beholding, the rulers also with them sneering, the soldiers mocking

with vulgar brutality, but Jesus dealing in ineffable grace with a justly crucified malefactor. No doubt there was the deepest of suffering for Himself. Certainly, too, His suffering, though not confined to the cross, there culminated, as there alone was sin judged; there God's necessary intolerance of it was proved, when only, but most really, imputed to Christ. Thus, the only perfect man, the last Adam, who was there rejected of the Jews, and despised of men, with a loud voice, which denied the exhaustion of nature in His death, commended His spirit, as man, to His Father. It is not here, therefore, One speaking in the sense of God's abandonment (as we saw in Matthew and Mark), though this cup He had, indeed, drank to the dregs. But in this Gospel the last words are of One who, whatever the forsaking of God for sin, was perfectly tranquil, and peacefully committed Himself to His Father. It is the act and language of Him whose confidence was unlimited in the One He was going to. He had come to do His will, and had done it in the face of growing scorn and rejection; and God had not guarded Him from the murderous hate of man, but contrariwise, delivered Him into their hands, greater things being in counsel and accomplishment than if He had been received. The truth is the sum of what all tell us. Those who believe God, instead of being fettered to the traditions of a school, good or bad, must open their mouth wide for Him to fill with His good things old and new. He who on the cross tasted, for expiation, the unutterable woe of which Matthew and Mark speak, is the same Jesus who, Luke tells us, never wavered for a moment, not merely in His obedience, but in unreserved confidence in God; and the expression of this, not of atonement, I read in the precious words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Verses 44-46.)

Accordingly, the centurion is mentioned here as owning Jesus to be “a righteous man,” whatever man might have judged or done. The people seem conscious that it was all over with them — stricken in heart over a deed they could not but feel to be dreadful, though hardly defined. God does not leave man without witness. But, as usual, with men without the revealed light of God, though conscious when sin is done that there is something utterly wrong it is soon forgotten; so here, though not without the sense that the case was desperate, they go not only as sheep without a shepherd, but stumble in the dark night. All His acquaintances and the women are seen in their sorrow — not vain surely not; but still they stood far off: (Verses 46-49.)

Yet was this the moment when, spite of a traitorous disciple, spite of another too confident that denied Him with oaths, spite of all who ought to have been faithful forsaking and fleeing, spite of the distant and saddened lookers on who had once followed Him devotedly, God emboldens a man of high station, who might have been then the least expected by us (and, as we are told elsewhere, Nicodemus). Joseph of Arimathea was a man that had waited for the kingdom of God for some time, a good man and just, and a real believer, though he had shrunk from open confession of the Lord Jesus; but now, when fear might naturally have more than ever operated to keep him back, grace made him bold. This, at least, was quite right, and like the God of all grace. If the death of our Lord does not unlock a man’s heart and tongue, I do not know what will. So this timid Joseph waxes valiant in fight. The honourable counsellor renounced the expediency and prudence of the past, horrified, no doubt, at their counsel and deed to which

he had not assented. But now he does more: he add to his faith virtue. He goes boldly to Pilate, and begs the body of Jesus, Which, being obtained, is worthily laid in the rock-hewn sepulchre, wherein never had man beenlaid. (Verse 53.)

“And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.’’ (Ver. 54-66.) It was affection, but with little intelligence. Their love lingered. over the scene of His death and burial, without for the present in the least realizing, that life which was to be put forth soon so gloriously. Had they not heard His words? Would He, would God, not make them good?

On the morrow of the sabbath, very early indeed in the morning, these Galilean women were there, and some others with them. (Luke 24:1) And they found the stone rolled away, but not the body of Jesus. They were not alone; angels appeared. Two men in shining array stood by these perplexed saints. “And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, [what a rebuke to their unbelief!] Why seek ye the living (One) among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you while 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.” (Ver. 5-8.) This last is ever a great point with Luke — the emphatic value always of any part of God’s word, but especially of the words of Jesus.

Accordingly, after this was duly reported to the apostles and the rest, one like another incredulous, we have the visit of Peter (accompanied, as John lets us know, by himself), who sees confirmation enough, and departed, wondering, in himself at that which was come to pass. (Verses 9-12.)

Luke then ushers in another scene, still more precious, peculiar in its details at least to himself — the journey to Emmaus, where Jesus joins Himself to the two downcast disciples, who discoursed, as they went, on the irreparable loss they had sustained. Jesus hears this tale of sorrow from their lips, brings out the state of their hearts, and then opens the Scriptures, instead of merely appealing to the facts in the way of evidence. This employment of the Scriptures by our Lord is very significant. It is the word of God which is the truest, deepest, weightiest testimony, even though the risen Jesus Himself were there, and its living, demonstration in person. But it is the written word which, as the apostle himself shows, is the sole adequate safeguard for the perilous times of the last days. Here, too, the loved companion of Paul proves, in the history of the resurrection, the value of the Scriptures. The word of God — here the Old Testament interpreted by Jesus — is the most valuable means for ascertaining the mind of God. Every Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable — yea, able to make us “wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.” Hence our Lord expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What a sample that day was of the walk of faith! Henceforth it was not a question of a living, Messiah on the earth, but of Him that was dead and risen, now seen by faith in the word of God. On the face

of the account, this was the great living lesson that our Lord was teaching, us through the two disciples. (Verses 13-29.)

But there was more. How is He to be known? There is but one way that can be trusted in which we can know Jesus. There are those in Christendom that descant upon Jesus as ignorant of His glory as a Jew or a Mahometan. Our own day has seen how men can speak and write eloquently of Jesus as a man here below, all the while serving Satan — denying His name, His person, His work, when they flatter themselves they are honouring Him, like the weeping women (Luke 23:27), without a grain of faith in His glory or His grace. Hence was it of all importance that we should learn wherein He is to be known. Thus Jesus sets forth the Only way in which He can be rightly known, or that can be confided in. On this alone God can put His seal. The seal of the Holy Ghost is unknown until there is the submission of faith to the death of Jesus. And so our Lord breaks bread with the disciples. It was not the Lord's Supper; but Jesus made use of that act of breaking the bread significantly, which the Lord's Supper brings before us continually. In it, as we know, bread is broken — the sign of His death. Thus Jesus was pleased, Himself with them, that the truth of His death should flash upon the two souls at Emmaus. He was made known unto them in the breaking of bread — in that most simple but striking action which symbolises His death. He had blessed, broken, and was giving the bread to them, when their eyes were opened, and they recognised their risen Lord. (Verse 30.)

There is a third supplemental point, which I only touch on — His instant disappearance after He was made known to them in the sign of His death. This is also

characteristic of Christians. We walk by faith, not by sight. (Verse 31.)

Thus the great evangelist, who exhibits what is most real for man's heart now, and what most of all maintains the glory of God in Christ, binds these things together for our instruction. Though Scripture was perfectly expounded by Jesus, and though hearts burned as they heard of these wondrous things, still it must be shown in concentrated form that the knowledge which alone can be commended by God or trusted by man is this — Jesus known in that which brings His death before the soul. The death of Jesus is the sole foundation of safety for a sinful man. This is the true way of knowing Jesus for a Christian. Anything short of this, anything other than this, whatever supplants it as fundamental truth, is false. Jesus is dead and risen, and so must be known, if He is to be known aright. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

And so, that same hour, we see the disciples returning to Jerusalem, and finding the eleven there, who say, "The Lord hath risen, and appeared unto Simon." (Verses 32-34.) Here we have nothing about Galilee. In Matthew, Galilee is the quarter especially noticed. A rejected Messiah, fitly and according to prophecy, finds Himself in Galilee, the despised place. It was so during His life and public ministry (and hence it figures in Mark so prominently). He takes the same place now after His death and resurrection, there resuming relations with His disciples. The godly remnant of the Jews must know the rejected Messiah there. His resurrection did not terminate their path of rejection. The Church knows Him

yet more blessedly as ascended, and itself one with Him on high; and its rejection is even more decided. However, in Matthew, Galilee is the sign for a converted Jewish remnant till He come to reign in power and glory. The remnant of the last days will know what it is to be cast outside Jerusalem also, and it is as outcasts that they will find real deepening of faith and due preparation of heart for receiving the Lord when he appears in the clouds of heaven. This Galilean resort Luke does not give here. Substantially Mark gives Galilee for the active life of the Saviour like Matthew, because, as has been said, there His ministry was chiefly exercised, and only occasionally in Jerusalem or elsewhere. Therefore the evangelist of the ministry of Jesus draws attention to the place in which He had ministered most — Galilee; but even he does not speak of it exclusively. Luke, on the contrary, says nothing of Galilee at this point. The reason seems to me manifest. His theme is the moral state of the disciples, the way of Christ's grace, the Christian path of faith, the place of the word of God, and the person of Christ, only known safely, according to God, in that which sets forth His death. This at least must he the basis.

There is another truth necessary to be known and proved, His real resurrection, who stood in the midst of them with a "Peace to you;" not without His death, but founded on it, and thus declared. So, in the next scene at Jerusalem, this finds its full display; for the Lord Jesus comes into their midst, and partakes of food before their eyes. There was His body; it was risen. Who could longer doubt that it was really the same Jesus who died, and will yet come in glory? "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself!" As we know, the Lord deigns to

go yet farther in John; but there it was to convict Thomas's unbelief, as well as with a mysterious typical meaning behind. He would correct the previously absent and still doubting disciple; it is the sight that is the point there. This is not the question here, but rather the reality of the resurrection, and the identity of Jesus risen with Him they had known as their Master, and withal as still man, not a spirit, but having flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them. (Verses 36-43.)

After this our Lord speaks once more of what was written in Moses and prophets and psalms concerning Him. (Ver. 44.) It is the word of God again brought out; not merely to two of them, but its unspeakable value for them all.

Further, He opens their understanding to understand the Scriptures, and gives them their great commission, but bids them remain in Jerusalem till endued with power from on high, when He sends them the promise of the Father. (Ver. 45-49.) Here the Lord does not say, "Make disciples of all the Gentiles, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This most fitly has its place in Matthew, spite (yea, because of) His rejection. The suffering but now risen Son of man takes the universal field of the world, and sends His disciples among all the nations to make disciples, and baptize them into the name of the Trinity. It is not, therefore, the old limits of Israel and the lost sheep, but He extends the knowledge of His name and mission outside. Instead of bringing Gentiles to see the glory of Jehovah shining on Zion, they are to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as now revealed fully;

and (instead of what Moses commanded) “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

In Luke we have not the charge of the work committed to the workmen, as in Mark, with signatures of God’s gracious power accompanying; but here it is the message of a Saviour dead and risen, the Second Man, according to Scripture, and the moral need of man and the grace of God, who proclaims in His name repentance and remission to all the nations or Gentiles. Therefore, just as we have seen the resurrection of our Lord in connection with Jerusalem, where He had been crucified, so He would have the preaching begun there, not going away, as it were, from the guilty city — alas! the holy city, and only the more guilty, because such was its name and privilege. But here, on the contrary, by virtue of Christ’s death who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, all disappears in the presence of the infinite grace of God — all blessing secured, if there be but the acceptance of Christ and His work. Hence He says, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.” No doubt man was guilty beyond measure and without excuse. There were mighty purposes of God to be accomplished; and not only must He rise on the third day, but He enjoins that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name — repentance necessarily showing the great moral work in man, remission of sins being God’s great provision of grace through redemption to clear the conscience. Both were to be preached in His name. Who that believes and understands the cross could dream longer of man’s worthiness? Repentance, so far from allowing it, is the perception and confession that there is no good in man,

in me; it is wrought by grace, and is inseparable from faith. It is man giving up himself as altogether bad, man resting upon God as altogether good to the bad, and both proved in the remission of sins by Jesus, whom man, Jew and Gentile, crucified and slew. Remission of sins therefore, with repentance, was to be preached in His name. This was the sole warrant and ground. They were to be preached to all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem.

In Matthew the point appears to be the rejection of Jerusalem, the rejecter, because of its Messiah, the discipular remnant starting from the mountain in Galilee; and the presence of the Lord being guaranteed till the end of the age, when other changes come. In Luke all disappears, except grace, in presence of sin and misery. Absolute grace begins, therefore, with the spot which needed it most, and Jerusalem is expressly named.

We have seen how this chapter settles, if I may so express it, the Christian system on its proper basis, bringing out its chief peculiarities with striking force and beauty. More remains of similar character, especially the very distinct privileges of the understanding opened to understand, and the power of the Holy Ghost; the one given then, the other not till Pentecost. “Then opened he their understanding, 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, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Thus the Holy Ghost was not given yet as an indwelling person, but rather a reiteration of

the Father's promise. Remaining in Jerusalem they should be clothed with power — an essential thing for Christianity, and quite distinct from spiritual intelligence already conferred, as is apparent also in Peter's word and way in Acts 1. In the Gospel of John where the person of Jesus shines so conspicuously, the Holy Ghost is set forth personally, with equal distinctness at least, in Luke 14, 16. But here this is not the point, but His power, although He be, of course, a person. It is rather the promise of the Spirit's power to act in man that is brought before us. They, like Christ, must be "anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power;" they must wait for "power from on high" from the risen and ascended Man.

But even so, the Lord Himself would not terminate the Gospel thus. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them." It was a spot that used to be most precious to Him, and, observe it well, was not less precious to Him after He rose from the dead. There is no greater mistake than to suppose, that an object of affection to Him before He died ceases to be such to Him when risen. Hence it would seem to give an open contradiction to those that deny the reality of the resurrection body, and of its proper affections. He was indeed a real man, albeit the Lord of glory. He led them out, then, as far as Bethany, the retreat of the Saviour, to which His heart turned in the days of His flesh. "And he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." He that filled with blessing the hearts devoted to Him in His life, was still blessing them when He was separated from them for heaven. "And they worshipped him." Such was the

fruit of His blessing, and of His great grace. “And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” It was meet it should be so. He that blesses us not only communicates a blessing, but gives the power that returns to God a blessing the power of real worship communicated to human hearts on the earth, by the Lord Jesus now risen from the dead. They “were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God;” but they were associated in life and love with One whose glory was far above them or any conceivable precincts of the earth, and were soon to be made one with Him, and to be the vessels of His power by the energy of the Holy Ghost, who would make this evident in due time.

May the Lord be pleased to bless His own word, and to grant that those who love Him and it may approach the scripture with still more confidence! If aught which has been said here tends to remove somewhat of mist from any eyes, encourages, simplifies, or otherwise helps in reading God’s word, surely my little labour will not have been in vain, either now or for eternity. The Lord alone can make His own word sanctifying. But it is much to believe it to be what it really is, not (as unbelief thinks) a field of darkness and uncertainty, requiring light upon it, but a light itself, which communicates light to the dark, through the power of the Holy Ghost revealing Christ. May we prove that it is indeed like Christ, of whom it speaks, needed, real, and unerring light to our souls; that it is also the sole, adequate, and irrefragable witness of divine wisdom and grace, but this only as revealed in and by Christ! I take it to be a token of great good that, as in early days, the person of Christ was not only the fiercest battleground and prime object of the

final struggle of the apostles on the earth, but was the means whereby the Spirit of God wrought to give a deeper and deepening enjoyment of the truth and grace of God more profoundly searching, no doubt, but at the same time more invigorating for the saints), so no otherwise, unless I be greatly mistaken, is it now. I remember the time, though unable to boast of any very lengthened scene to look back on as a Christian, when at least almost all — for I will not say all — were more engaged in attacking ecclesiastical error, and spreading much of kindred and other truth (and, in its place and time, important truth). But it was truth that did not so directly build up the soul, nor did it so immediately concern the Lord Himself. And although not a few, who then seemed strong and courageous enough, are gone to the winds (and a similar sifting still goes on, and will to the end), yet sure am I that in the midst of all these troubles and humiliations God has been elevating the standard of Christ for those who are firm and faithful. God has shown that His name is, as ever, a stumbling-stone for unbelief; but for the simple and spiritual a sure foundation, and most precious. The Lord grant that even these our studies of the Gospels, which have been necessarily curt and cursory, may nevertheless give an impulse not only to younger saints, but to those who may be ever so old; for assuredly there is no one, whatever may be his maturity, who will not be all the better for a fuller acquaintance with Him who is from the beginning.

1 “Testament” is wrong here, and, indeed, everywhere else in the New Testament, save in the parenthesis of Heb 9.16, 17.

John

John 1 - 7.

The opening verses (John 1:1-18) introduce the most glorious subject which God Himself ever gave in employing the pen of man; not only the most glorious in point of theme, but in the profoundest point of view; for what the Holy Ghost here brings before us is the Word, the everlasting, Word, when He was with God, traced down from before all time, when there was no creature. It is not exactly the Word with the Father; for such a phrase would not be according to the exactness of the truth; but the Word with God. The term God comprehends not only the Father, but the Holy Ghost also. He who was the Son of the Father then, as I need not say always, is regarded here as the revealer of God; for God, as such, does not reveal Himself. He makes His, nature known by the Word. The Word, nevertheless, is here spoken of before there was any one for God to reveal Himself to. He is, therefore, and in the strictest sense, eternal. “In the beginning was the Word,” when there was no reckoning of time; for the beginning of what we call time comes before us in the third verse. “All things,” it is said, “were made by Him.” This is clearly the origination of all creaturehood, wherever and whatever it be. Heavenly beings there were before the earthly; but whether — no matter of whom you speak, or of, what — angels or men, whether heaven or earth, all things were made by Him.

Thus He, whom we know to be the Son of the Father, is here presented as the Word — who subsisted personally in the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῆ) — who was with God, and

was Himself God — of the same nature, yet a distinct personal being. To clench this matter specially against all reveries of Gnostics or others, it is added, that He was in the beginning with God.1 Observe another thing: “The Word was with God” — not the Father. As the Word and God, so the Son and the Father are correlative. We are here in the exactest phrase, and at the same time in the briefest terms, brought into the presence of the deepest conceivable truths which God,. alone knowing, alone could communicate to man. Indeed, it is He alone who gives the truth; for this is not the bare knowledge of such or such facts, whatever the accuracy of the information. Were all things conveyed with the most admirable correctness, it would not amount to divine revelation. Such a communication would still differ, not in degree only, but in kind. A revelation from God not only supposes true statements, but God’s mind made known so as to act morally on man, forming his thoughts and affections according to His own character. God makes Himself known in what He communicates by, of, and in Christ.

In the case before us, nothing can be more obvious than that the Holy Ghost, for the glory of God, is undertaking to make known that which touches the Godhead in the closest way, and is meant for infinite blessing to all in the person of the Lord Jesus. These verses accordingly begin with Christ our Lord; not from, but in the beginning, when nothing was yet created. It is the eternity of His being, in no point of which could it be said He was not, but, contrariwise, that He was. Yet was He not alone. God was there — not the Father only, but the Holy Ghost, beside the Word Himself, who was God, and had divine nature as they.

Again, it is not said that in the beginning He was, in the sense of then coming into being (ἐγένετο), but He existed (

ἦν). Thus before all time the Word was. When the great truth of the incarnation is noted in verse 14, it is said — not that the Word came into existence, but that He was made (ἐγένετο) flesh — began so to be. This, therefore, so much the more contrasts with verses 1 and 2.

In the beginning, then, before there was any creature, was the Word, and the Word was with God. There was distinct personality in the Godhead, therefore, and the Word was a distinct person Himself (not, as men dreamt, an emanation in time, though eternal and divine in nature, proceeding from God as its source). The Word had a proper personality, and at the same time was God — "the Word was God." Yea, as the next verse binds and sums up all together, He, the Word, was in the beginning with God. The personality was as eternal as the existence, not in (after some mystic sort) but with God. I can conceive no statement more admirably complete and luminous in the fewest and simplest words.

Next comes the attributing of creation to the Word. This must be the work of God, if anything was; and here again the words are precision itself — "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Other words far less nervous are used elsewhere: unbelief might cavil and construe them into forming or fashioning. Here the Holy Ghost employs the most explicit language, that all things began to be, or received being, through the Word, to the exclusion of one single thing that ever did receive being apart from Him language which leaves the fullest room for

Uncreate Beings, as we have already seen, subsisting eternally and distinctly, yet equally God. Thus the statement is positive that the Word is the source of all things which have received being (γενόμενα); that there is no creature which did not thus derive its being from Him. There cannot, therefore, be a more rigid, absolute shutting out of any creature from origination, save by the Word.

It is true that in other parts of Scripture we hear God, as such, spoken of as Creator. We hear of His making the worlds by the Son. But there is and can be no contradiction in Scripture. The truth is, that whatever was made was made according to the Father's sovereign will; but the Son, the Word of God, was the person who put forth the power, and never without the energy of the Holy Ghost, I may add, as the Bible carefully teaches us. Now this is of immense importance for that which the Holy Ghost has in view in the gospel of John, because the object is to attest the nature and light of God in the person of the Christ; and therefore we have here not merely what the Lord Jesus was as born of a woman, born under the law, which has its appropriate place in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, but what He was and is as God. On the other hand, the gospel of Mark omits every thing of the kind. A genealogy such as Matthew's and Luke's, we have seen, would be totally out of place there; and the reason is manifest. The subject of Mark is the testimony of Jesus as having taken, though a Son, the place of a servant in the earth. Now, in a servant, no matter from what noble lineage he comes, there is no genealogy requisite. What is wanted in a servant is, that the work should be done well, no matter about the genealogy. Thus, even if it were the Son of God Himself,

so perfectly did He condescend to the condition of a servant, and so mindful was the Spirit of it, that, accordingly, the genealogy which was demanded in Matthew, which is of such signal beauty and value in Luke, is necessarily excluded from the gospel of Mark. For higher reasons it could have no place in John. In Mark it is because of the lowly place of subjection which the Lord was pleased to take; it is excluded from John, on the contrary, because there He is presented as being above all genealogy. He is the source of other people's genealogy — yea, of the genesis of all things. We may say therefore boldly, that in the gospel of John such a descent could not be inserted in consistency with its character. If it admit any genealogy, it must be what is set forth in the preface of John — the very verses which are occupying us — which exhibit the divine nature and eternal personality of His being. He was the Word, and He was God; and, if we may anticipate, let us add, the Son, the only begotten Son of the Father. This, if any thing, is His genealogy here. The ground is evident; because everywhere in John He is God. No doubt the Word became flesh, as we may see more of presently, even in this inspired introduction; and we have the reality of His becoming man insisted on. Still, manhood was a place that He entered. Godhead was the glory that He possessed from everlasting — His own eternal nature of being. It was not conferred upon Him. There is not, nor can be, any such thing as a derived subordinate Godhead; though men may be said to be gods, as commissioned of God, and representing Him in government. He was God before creation began, before all time. He was God independently of any circumstances. Thus, as we have seen, for the Word the apostle John claims eternal existence, distinct

personality, and divine nature; and withal asserts the eternal distinctness of that person. (Verses 1, 2)

Such is the Word Godward (

πρὸς τὸν Θεόν). We are next told of Him in relation to the creature. (Verses 3-5) In the earlier verses it was exclusively His being. In verse 3 He acts, He creates, He causes all things to come into existence; and apart from Him not one thing came into existence which is existent (γέγονεν). Nothing more comprehensive, nothing more exclusive.

The next verse (4) predicts of Him that which is yet more momentous: not creative power, as in verse 3, but life. “In him was life.” Blessed truth for those who know the spread of death over this lower scene of creation! and the rather as the Spirit adds, that “the life was the light of men.” Angels were not its sphere, nor was it restricted to a chosen nation: “the life was the light of men.” Life was not in man, even unfallen; at best, the first man, Adam, became a living soul when instinct with the breath of God. Nor is it ever said, even of a saint, that in him is or was life, though life he has; but he has it only in the Son. In Him, the Word, was life, and the life was the light of men. Such was its relationship.

No doubt, whatever was revealed of old was of Him; whatever word came out from God was from Him, the Word, and light of men. But then God was not revealed; for He was not manifested. On the contrary, He dwelt in the thick darkness, behind the veil in the most holy place, or visiting men but angelically otherwise. But here, we are told, “the light shines in the darkness.” (Ver. 5) Mark the abstractedness of the language — it “shines” (not shone). How solemn, that

darkness is all the light finds! and what darkness! how impenetrable and hopeless! All other darkness yields and fades away before light; but here “the darkness comprehended it not” (as the fact is stated, and not the abstract principle only). It was suited to man, even as it was the light expressly of men, so that man is without excuse.

But was there adequate care that the light should be presented to men? What was the way taken to secure this? Unable God could not be: was He indifferent? God gave testimony; first, John the Baptist; then the Light itself. “There was (ἐγένετο) a man sent from God, whose name was John.” (v. 6) He passes by all the prophets, the various preliminary dealings of the Lord, the shadows of the law: not even the promises are noticed here. We shall find some of these introduced or alluded to for a far different purpose later on. John, then, came to bear witness about the Light, that all through him might believe. (Verse 7) But the Holy Ghost is most careful to guard against all mistake. Could any run too close a parallel between the light of men in the Word, and him who is called the burning and shining lamp in a subsequent chapter? Let them learn their error. He, John, “was not that light;” there is but one such: none was similar or second. God cannot be compared with man. John came “that he might bear witness about the light,” not to take its place or set himself up. The true Light was that which, coming into the world, lighteth every man.2 Not only does He necessarily, as being God, deal with every man (for His glory could not be restricted to a part of mankind), but the weighty truth here announced is the connection with His incarnation of this universal light, or revelation of

God in Him, to man as such. The law, as we know from elsewhere, had dealt with the Jewish people temporarily, and for partial purposes. This was but a limited sphere. Now that the Word comes into the world, in one way or another light shines for every one: it may be, leaving some under condemnation, as we know it does for the great mass who believe not; it may be light not only on but in man, where there is faith through the action of divine grace. It is certain that, whatever light in relation to God there may be, and wherever it is given in Him, there is not, there never was, spiritual light apart from Christ — all else is darkness. It could not be otherwise. This light in its own character must go out to all from God. So it is said elsewhere, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared.” It is not that all men receive the blessing; but, in its proper scope and nature, it addresses itself to all. God sends it for all. Law may govern one nation; grace refuses to be limited in its appeal, however it may be in fact through man’s unbelief.

understood it as here given:

Εἰπὼν τὸ· ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κοσμον, περὶ τοῦ δεσπότου Χριστοῦ καλως ἐπήγαγεν τὸ· ἐν τῳ κοσμῳ ἦν, ὥστε δεῖξαι, ὅτι τὸ ἐρχόμενον πρὸς την διὰ σαρκὸς εἶπεν φανέρωσιν. (Ed. Fritzsche, p. 21)

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him.” (Verse 9) The world therefore surely ought to have known its Maker. Nay, “the world knew him not.” From the very first, man, being a sinner, was wholly lost. Here the unlimited scene is in view; not Israel, but the world. Nevertheless, Christ did come to His own things, His proper, peculiar possession; for there were special

relationships. They should have understood more about Him — those that were specially favoured. It was not so.

“He came unto his own [things], and his own [people] received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [rather, authority, right, or title] to become children of God.” (Ver. 11, 12) It was not a question now of Jehovah and His servants. Neither does the Spirit say exactly as the English Bible says — “sons,” but children. His glorious person would have none now in relation to God but members of the family. Such was the grace that God was displaying in Him, the true and full expresser of His mind. He gave them title to take the place of children of God, even to those that believe on His name. Sons they might have been in bare title; but these had the right of children.

All disciplinary action, every probationary process, disappears. The ignorance of the world has been proved, the rejection of Israel is complete: then only is it that we hear of this new place of children. It is now eternal reality, and the name of Jesus Christ is that which puts all things to a final test. There is difference of manner for the world and His own — ignorance and rejection. Do any believe on His name? Be they who they may now, as many as receive Him become children of God. It is no question here of every man, but of such as believe. Do they receive Him not? For them, Israel, or the world, all is over. Flesh and world are judged morally. God the Father forms a new family in, by, and for Christ. All others prove not only that they are bad, but that they hate perfect goodness, and more than that, life and light — the true light in the Word. How can such have relationship with God?

Thus, manifestly, the whole question is terminated at the very starting-point of our gospel; and this is characteristic of John all through: manifestly all is decided. It is not merely a Messiah, who comes and offers Himself, as we find in other gospels, with most painstaking diligence, and presented to their responsibility; but here from the outset the question is viewed as closed. The Light, on coming into the world, lightens every man with the fulness of evidence which was in Him, and at once discovers the true state as truly as it will be revealed in the last day when He judges all, as we find it intimated in the gospel afterwards. (John 12:48)

Before the manner of His manifestation comes before us in verse 14, we have the secret explained why some, and not all, received Christ. It was not that they were better than their neighbours. Natural birth had nothing to do with this new thing; it was a new nature altogether in those who received Him: “Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” It was an extraordinary birth; of God, not man in any sort, or measure, but a new and divine nature (2 Peter 1) imparted to the believer wholly of grace. All this, however, was abstract, whether as to the nature of the Word or as to the place of the Christian.

But it is important we should know how He entered the world. We have seen already that thus light was shed on men. How was this? The Word, in order to accomplish these infinite things, “was made. (ἐγένετο) flesh, and dwelt among us.” It is here we learn in what condition of His person God was to be revealed and the work done; not what He was in nature, but what He became. The great fact of the incarnation is brought before us — “The

Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father"). His aspect as thus tabernacling among the disciples was "full of grace and truth." Observe, that blessed as the light is, being God's moral nature, truth is more than this, and is introduced by grace. It is the revelation of God — yea, of the Father and the Son, and not merely the detecter of man. The Son had not come to execute the judgments of the law they knew, nor even to promulgate a new and higher law. His was an errand incomparably deeper, more worthy of God, and suitable to One "full of grace and truth." He wanted nothing; He came to give — yea, the very best, so to speak, that God has.

What is there in God more truly divine than grace and truth? The incarnate Word was here full of grace and truth. Glory would be displayed in its day. Meanwhile there was a manifestation of goodness, active in love in the midst of evil, and toward such; active in the making known God and man, and every moral relation, and what He is toward man, through and in the Word made flesh. This is grace and truth. And such was Jesus. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake: He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me." Coming after John as to date, He is necessarily preferred before him in dignity; for He was (ἦν) [not come into being (

ἐγένετο)] before Him. He was God. This statement (verse 15) is a parenthesis, though confirmatory of verse 14, and connects John's testimony with this new section of Christ's manifestation in flesh; as we saw John introduced in the earlier verses, which treated abstractly of Christ's nature as the Word.

Then, resuming the strain of verse 14, we are told, in verse 16, that “of his fulness have all we received.” So rich and transparently divine was the grace: not some souls, more meritorious than the rest, rewarded according to a graduated scale of honour, but “of his fulness have all we received.” What can be conceived more notably standing out in contrast with the governmental system God had set up, and man had known in times past? Here there could not be more, and He would not give less: even “grace upon grace.” Spite of the most express signs, and the manifest finger of God that wrote the ten words on tables of stone, the law sinks into comparative insignificance. “The law was given by Moses.” God does not here condescend to call it His, though, of course, it was His — and holy, just, and good, both in itself and in its use, if used lawfully. But if the Spirit speaks of the Son of God, the law dwindles at once into the smallest possible proportions: everything yields to the honour the Father puts oil the Son. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came (ἐγένετο) by Jesus Christ.” (ver. 17) The law, thus given, was in itself no giver, but an exacter; Jesus, full of grace and truth, gave, instead of requiring or receiving; and He Himself has said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Truth and grace were not sought nor found in man, but began to subsist here below by Jesus Christ.

We have now the Word made flesh, called Jesus Christ — this person, this complex person, that was manifest in the world; and it is He that brought it all in. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Lastly, closing this part, we have another most remarkable contrast. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son,” etc. Now, it is no longer a

question of nature, but of relationship; and hence it is not said simply the Word, but the Son, and the Son in the highest possible character, the only-begotten Son, distinguishing Him thus from any other who might, in a subordinate sense, be son of God — “the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” Observe: not which was, but “which is.” He is viewed as retaining the same perfect intimacy with the Father, entirely unimpaired by local or any other circumstances He had entered. Nothing in the slightest degree detracted from His own personal glory, and from the infinitely near relationship which He had had with the Father from all eternity. He entered this world, became flesh, as born of woman; but there was no diminution of His own glory, when He, born of the virgin, walked on earth, or when rejected of man, cut off as Messiah, He was forsaken of God for sin — our sin — on the cross. Under all changes, outwardly, He abode as from eternity the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. Mark what, as such, He does declare Him. No man hath seen God at any time. He could be declared only by One who was a divine person in the intimacy of the Godhead, yea, was the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. Hence the Son, being in this ineffable nearness of love, has declared not God only, but the Father. Thus we all not only receive of His fulness, (and what fulness illimitable was there not in Him!) but He, who is the Word made flesh, is the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, and so competent to declare, as in fact He has. It is not only the nature, but the model and fulness of the blessing in the Son, who declared the Father.

The distinctiveness of such a testimony to the Saviour’s glory need hardly be pointed out. One needs no more

than to read, as believers, these wonderful expressions of the Holy Ghost, where we cannot but feel that we are on ground wholly different from that of the other gospels. Of course they are just as truly inspired as John's; but for that very reason they were not inspired to give the same testimony. Each had his own; all are harmonious, all perfect, all divine; but not all so many repetitions of the same thing. He who inspired them to communicate His thoughts of Jesus in the particular line assigned to each, raised up John to impart the highest revelation, and thus complete the circle by the deepest views of the Son of God.

After this we have, suitably to this gospel, John's connection with the Lord Jesus. (ver. 19-37) It is here presented historically. We have had his name introduced into each part of the preface of our evangelist. Here there is no John proclaiming Jesus as the One who was about to introduce the kingdom of heaven. Of this we learn nothing, here. Nothing is said about the fan in His hand; nothing of His burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. This is all perfectly true, of course; and we have it elsewhere. His earthly rights are just where they should be; but not here, where the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has His appropriate place. It is not John's business here to call attention to His Messiahship, not even when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask, Who art thou? Nor was it from any indistinctness in the record, or in him who gave it. For "he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not 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? (ver. 20-25) John does not even speak of Him as one who, on His rejection as Messiah, would step into a larger glory. To the Pharisees, indeed, his words as to the Lord are curt: nor does he tell them of the divine ground of His glory, as he had before and does after.3 He says, One was among them of whom they had no conscious knowledge, “that cometh after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to loose.” (Ver. 26, 27) For himself he was not the Christ, but for Jesus he says no more. How striking the omission! for he knew He was the Christ. But here it was not God’s purpose to record it.

Verse 29 opens John’s testimony to his disciples. (Ver. 29-34) How rich it is, and how marvellously in keeping with our gospel! Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, but withal, as he had said, the eternal One, yet in view of His manifestation to Israel (and, therefore, John was come baptizing with water — a reason here given, but not to the Pharisees in verses 25-27). Further, John attests that he saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and abiding on Him — the appointed token that He it is who baptizes with the Holy Ghost — even the Son of God. None else could do either work: for here we see His great work on earth, and His heavenly power. In these two points of view, more particularly, John gives testimony to Christ; He is the lamb as the taker away of the world’s sin; the same is

He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. Both of them were in relation to man on the earth; the one while He was here, the other from above. His death on the cross included much more, clearly answering to the first; His baptizing with the Holy Ghost followed His going to heaven. Nevertheless, the heavenly part is little dwelt on, as John's gospel displays our Lord more as the expression of God revealed on earth, than as Man ascended to heaven, which fell far more to the province of the apostle of the Gentiles. In John He is One who could be described as Son of man who is in heaven; but He belonged to heaven, because He was divine. His exaltation there is not without notice in the gospel, but exceptionally.

Remark, too, the extent of the work involved in verse 29. As the Lamb of God (of the Father it is not said), He has to do with the world. Nor will the full force of this expression be witnessed till the glorious result of His blood — shedding sweep away the last trace of sin in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It finds, of course, a present application, and links itself with that activity of grace in which God is now sending out the gospel to any sinner and every sinner. Still the eternal day alone will show out the full virtue of that which belongs to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the world's sin. Observe, it is not (as is often very erroneously said or sung) a question of sins, but of the "sin" of the world. The sacrificial death of Him who is God goes far beyond the thought of Israel. How, indeed, could it be stayed within narrow limits? It passes over all question of dispensations, until it accomplishes, in all its extent, that purpose for which He thus died. No doubt there are intervening applications;

but such is the ultimate result of His work as the Lamb of God. Even now faith knows, that instead of sin being the great object before God, ever since the cross He has had before His eyes that sacrifice which put away sin. Notably He is now applying it to the reconciliation of a people, who are also baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body. By and by He will apply it to “that nation,” the Jews, as to others also, and finally (always excepting the unbelieving and evil) to the entire system, the world. I do not mean by this all individuals, but creation; for nothing can be more certain, than that those who do not receive the Son of God are so much the worse for having heard the gospel. The rejection of Christ is the contempt of God Himself, in that of which He is most jealous, the honour of the Saviour, His Son. The refusal of His precious blood will, on the contrary, make their case incomparably worse than that of the heathen who never heard the good news.

What a witness all this to His person! None but a divine being could thus deal with the world. No doubt He must become a man, in order, amongst other reasons, to be a sufferer, and to die. None the less did the result of His death proclaim His Deity. So in the baptism with the Holy Ghost, who would pretend to such a power? No mere man, nor angel, not the highest, the archangel, but the Son.

So we see in the attractive power, afterwards dealing with individual souls. For were it not God Himself in the person of Jesus, it had been no glory to God, but a wrong and a rival. For nothing can be more observable than the way in which He becomes the centre round whom those that belong to God are gathered. This is the marked effect on the third day (ver. 29, 34) of John Baptist’s

testimony here named; the first day (ver. 29) on which, as it were, Jesus speaks and acts in His grace as here shown on the earth. It is evident, that were He not God, it would be an interference with His glory, a place taken inconsistent with His sole authority, no less than it must be also, and for that reason, altogether ruinous to man. But He, being God, was manifesting and, on the contrary, maintaining the divine glory here below. John, therefore, who had been the honoured witness before of God's call, "the voice," etc., does now by the outpouring of his heart's delight, as well as testimony, turn over, so to say, his disciples to Jesus. Beholding Him as He walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples leave John for Jesus. (ver. 35-40) Our Lord acts as One fully conscious of His glory, as indeed He ever was.

Bear in mind that one of the points of instruction in this first part of our gospel is the action of the Son of God before His regular Galilean ministry. The first four chapters of John precede in point of time the notices of His ministry in the other gospels. John was not yet cast into prison. Matthew, Mark, and Luke start, as far as regards the public labours of the Lord, with John cast into prison. But all that is historically related of the Lord Jesus in John 1 - 4. was before the imprisonment of the Baptist. Here, then, we have a remarkable display of that which preceded His Galilean ministry, or public manifestation. Yet before a miracle, as well as in the working of those which set forth His glory, it is evident that so far from its being a gradual growth, as it were, in His mind, He had, all simple and lowly though He were, the deep, calm, constant consciousness that He was God. He acts as such. If He put forth His power, it was

not only beyond man's measure, but unequivocally divine, however also the humblest and most dependent of men. Here we see Him accepting, not as fellow-servant, but as Lord, those souls who had been under the training of the predicted messenger of Jehovah that was to prepare His way before, His face. Also one of the two thus drawn to Him first finds his own brother Simon (with the words, We have found the Messiah), and led him to Jesus, who forthwith gave him his new name in terms which surveyed, with equal ease and certainty, past, present, and future. Here again, apart from this divine insight, the change or gift of the name marks His glory. (Verses 41-44)

On the morrow Jesus begins, directly and indirectly, to call others to follow Himself. He tells Philip to follow Him. This leads Philip to Nathanael, in whose case, when he comes to Jesus, we see not divine power alone in sounding the souls of men, but over creation. Here was One on earth who knew all secrets. He saw him under the fig tree. He was God. Nathanael's call is just as clearly typical of Israel in the latter day. The allusion to the fig-tree confirms this. So does his confession: Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel. (See Psalm 2) But the Lord tells him of greater things he, should see, and says to him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, henceforth (not "hereafter," but henceforth) ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man. It is the wider, universal glory of the Son of man (according to Psalm 8); but the most striking part of it verified from that actual moment because of the glory of His person, which needed not the day of glory to

command the attendance of the angels of God — this mark, as Son of man. (Verses 44-51)

On the third day is the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where was His mother, Jesus also, and His disciples. (John 2) The change of water into wine manifested His glory as the beginning of signs; and He gave another in this early purging of the temple of Jerusalem. Thus we have traced, first, hearts not only attracted to Him, but fresh souls called to follow Him; then, in type, the call of Israel by-and-by; finally, the disappearance of the sign of moral purifying for the joy of the new covenant, when Messiah's time comes to bless the needy earth; but along with this the execution of judgment in Jerusalem, and its long defiled temple. All this clearly goes down to millennial days.

As a present fact, the Lord justifies the judicial act before their eyes by His relationship with God as His Father, and gives the Jews a sign in the temple of His body, as the witness of His resurrection power. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He is ever God; He is the Son; He quickens and raises from the dead. Later He was determined to be Son of God with power by resurrection of the dead. They had eyes, but they saw not; ears had they, but they heard not, nor did they understand His glory. Alas! not the Jews only; for, as far as intelligence went, it was little better with the disciples till He rose from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord is not more truly a demonstration of His power and glory, than the only deliverance for disciples from the thraldom of Jewish influence. Without it there is no divine understanding of Christ, or of His word, or of Scripture. Further, it is connected intimately with the evidence of man's ruin by sin. Thus it is a kind of

transitional fact for a most important part of our gospel, though still introductory. Christ was the true sanctuary, not that on which man had laboured so long in Jerusalem. Man might pull Him down — destroy Him, as far as man could, and surely to be the basis in God's hand of better blessing; but He was God, and in three days He would raise up this temple. Man was judged: another Man was there, the Lord from heaven, soon to stand in resurrection.

It is not now the revelation of God meeting man either in essential nature, or as manifested in flesh; nor is it the course of dispensational dealing presented in a parenthetic as well as mysterious form, beginning with John the Baptist's testimony, and going down to the millennium in the Son, full of grace and truth. It becomes a question of man's own condition, and how he stands in relation to the kingdom of God. This question is raised, or rather settled, by the Lord in Jerusalem, at the passover feast, where many believed on His name, beholding the signs He wrought. The dreadful truth comes out: the Lord did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men. How withering the words! He had no need that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. It is not denunciation, but the most solemn sentence in the calmest manner. It was no longer a moot-point whether God could trust man; for, indeed, He could not. The question really is, whether man would trust God. Alas! he would not.

John 3 follows this up. God orders matters so that a favoured teacher of men, favoured as none others were in Israel, should come to Jesus by night. The Lord meets him at once with the strongest assertion of the absolute necessity that a man should be born anew in order to

see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus, not understanding in the least such a want for himself, expresses his wonder, and hears our Lord increasing in the strength of the requirement. Except one were born of water and of the Spirit, he could not enter the kingdom of God. This was necessary for the kingdom of God; not for some special place of glory, but for any and every part of God's kingdom. Thus we have here the other side of the truth: not merely what God is in life and light, in grace and truth, as revealed in Christ coming down to man; but man is now judged in the very root of his nature, and proved to be entirely incapable, in his best state, of seeing or entering the kingdom of God. There is the need of another nature, and the only way in which this nature is communicated is by being born of water and the Spirit — the employment of the word of God in the quickening energy of the Holy Ghost. So only is man born of God. The Spirit of God uses that word; it is thus invariably in conversion. There is no other way in which the new nature is made good in a soul. Of course it is the revelation of Christ; but here He was simply revealing the sources of this indispensable new birth. There is no changing or bettering the old man; and, thanks be to God, the new does not degenerate or pass away. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Verses 1-6)

But the Lord goes farther, and bids Nicodemus not wonder at His insisting on this need. As there is an absolute necessity on God's part that man should be thus born anew, so He lets him know there is an active grace of the Spirit, as the wind blows where it will, unknown and uncontrolled by man, for every one that is born of the Spirit, who is sovereign in operation. First, a

new nature is insisted on — the Holy Ghost's quickening of each soul who is vitally related to God's kingdom; next, the Spirit of God takes an active part — not as source or character only, but acting sovereignly, which opens the way not only for a Jew, but for "every one." (Verses 7, 8)

It is hardly necessary to furnish detailed disproof of the crude, ill-considered notion (originated by the fathers), that baptism is in question. In truth, Christian baptism did not yet exist, but only such as the disciples used, like John the Baptist; it was not instituted of Christ till after His resurrection, as it sets forth His death. Had it been meant, it was no wonder that Nicodemus did not know how these things could be. But the Lord reproaches him, the master of Israel, with not knowing these things: that is, as a teacher, with Israel for his scholar, he ought to have known them objectively, at least, if not consciously. Isaiah 44:3, Isaiah 59:21, Ezekiel 36:25-27 ought to have made the Lord's meaning plain to an intelligent Jew. (Verse 10)

The Lord, it is true, could and did go farther than the prophets: even if He taught on the same theme, He could speak with conscious divine dignity and knowledge (not merely what was assigned to an instrument or messenger). "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (Verses 11-13) He (and He was not alone here) knew God, and the things of God, consciously in Himself,

as surely as He knew all men, and what was in man objectively. He could, therefore, tell them of heavenly things as readily as of earthly things; but the incredulity about the latter, shown in the wondering ignorance of the new birth as a requisite for God's kingdom, proved it was useless to tell of the former. For He who spoke was divine. Nobody had gone up to heaven: God had taken more than one; but no one had gone there as of right. Jesus not only could go up, as He did later, but He had come down thence, and, even though man, He was the Son of man that is in heaven. He is a divine person; His manhood brought no attainder to His rights as God. Heavenly things, therefore, could not but be natural to Him, if one may so say.

Here the Lord introduces the cross. (Ver. 14, 15) It is not a question simply of the Son of God, nor is He spoken of here as the Word made flesh. But "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must (δεῖ) the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." As the new birth for the kingdom of God, so the cross is absolutely necessary for eternal life. In the Word was life, and the life was the light of men. It was not intended for other beings — it was God's free gift to man, to the believer, of course. Man, dead in sins, was the object of His grace; but then man's state was such, that it would have been derogatory to God had that life been communicated without the cross of Christ: the Son of man lifted up on it was the One in whom God dealt judicially with the evil estate of man, for the, full consequences of which He made Himself responsible. It would not suit God, if it would suit man, that He, seeing all, should just pronounce on man's corruption, and then forthwith let

him off with a bare pardon. One must be born again. But even this sufficed not: the Son of man must be lifted up. It was impossible that there should not be righteous dealing with human evil against God, in its sources and its streams. Accordingly, if the law raised the question of righteousness in man, the cross of the Lord Jesus, typifying Him made sin, is the answer; and there has all been settled to the glory of God, the Lord Jesus having suffered all the inevitable consequences. Hence, then, we have the Lord Jesus alluding to this fresh necessity, if man was to be blessed according to God. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” But this, however worthy of God, and indispensable for man, could not of itself give an adequate expression of what God is; because in this alone, neither His own love nor the glory of His Son finds due display.

Hence, after having first unmistakably laid down the necessity of the cross, He next shows the grace that was manifested in the gift of Jesus. Here He is not portrayed as the Son of man who must be lifted up, but as the Son of God who was given. “For God,” He says, “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The one, like the other, contributes to this great end, whether the Son of man necessarily lifted up, or the only begotten Son of God given in His love. (Verse 16)

Let it not be passed by, that while the new birth or regeneration is declared to be essential to a part in the kingdom of God, the Lord in urging this intimates that He had not gone beyond the earthly things of that

kingdom. Heavenly things are set in evident contradistinction, and link themselves immediately here, as everywhere, with the cross as their correlative. (See Heb. 12:2, Heb. 13:11-13) Again, let me just remark in passing, that although, no doubt, we may in a general way speak of those who partake of the new nature as having that life, yet the Holy Ghost refrains from predicating of any saints the full character of eternal life as a present thing until we have the cross of Christ laid (at least doctrinally) as the ground of it. But when the Lord speaks of His cross, and not God's judicial requirements only, but the gift of Himself in His true personal glory as the occasion for the grace of God to display itself to the utmost, then, and not till then, do we hear of eternal life, and this connected with both these points of view. The chapter pursues this subject, showing that it is not only God who thus deals — first, with the necessity of man before His own immutable nature; next, blessing according to the riches of His grace — but, further, that man's state morally is detected yet more awfully in presence of such grace as well as holiness in Christ. "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (Ver. 17) This decides all before the execution of judgment, Every man's lot is made manifest by his attitude toward God's testimony concerning His Son. "He that believeth on him is not judged: but he that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Ver. 19) Other things, the merest trifles, may serve to indicate a man's condition; but a new responsibility is created by this infinite display of divine goodness in Christ, and the evidence is decisive and final, that the unbeliever is already judged before

God. “And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (Verses 20, 21)

The Lord and the disciples are next seen in the country district, not far, it would seem, from John, who was baptizing as they were. The disciples of John dispute with a Jew about purification; but John himself renders a bright witness to the glory of the Lord Jesus. In vain did any come to the Baptist to report the widening circle around Christ. He bows to, as he explains, the sovereign will of God. He reminds them of his previous disclaimer of any place beyond one sent before Jesus. His joy was that of a friend of the Bridegroom (to whom, not to him, the bride belonged), and now fulfilled as he heard the Bridegroom’s voice. “He must, increase, but I decrease.” Blessed servant he of an infinitely blessed and blessing Master! Then (ver. 31-36) he speaks of His person in contrast with himself and all; of His testimony and of the result, both as to His own glory, and consequently also for the believer on, and the rejecter of, the Son. He that comes from above — from heaven — is above all. Such was Jesus in person, contrasted with all who belong to the earth. Just as distinct and beyond comparison is His testimony who, coming from heaven and above all, testifies what He saw and heard, however it might be rejected. But see the blessed fruit of receiving it. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure

unto him.” I apprehend the words the Authorised Version gives in italics should disappear. The addition of “unto him” detracts, to my mind, from the exceeding preciousness of what seems to be, at least, left open. For the astonishing thought is, not merely that Jesus receives the Holy Ghost without measure, but that God gives the Spirit also, and not by measure, through Him to others. In the beginning of the chapter it was rather an essential indispensable action of the Holy Ghost required; here it is the privilege of the Holy Ghost given. No doubt Jesus Himself had the Holy Ghost given to Him, as it was meet that He in all things should have the pre-eminence; but it shows yet more both the personal glory of Christ and the efficacy of His work, that He now gives the same Spirit to those who receive His testimony, and set to their seal that God is true. How singularly is the glory of the Lord Jesus thus viewed, as invested with the testimony of God and its crown! What more glorious proof than that the Holy Ghost is given — not a certain defined power or gift, but the Holy Ghost Himself; for God gives not the Spirit by measure!

All is fitly closed by the declaration, that “the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” It is not merely or most of all a great prophet or witness: He is the Son; and the Father has given all things to be in His hand. There is the nicest care to maintain His personal glory, no matter what the subject may be. The results for the believer or unbeliever are eternal in good or in evil. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that disobeys the Son, in the sense of not being subject to His person, “shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” Such is the issue of the Son of God present in this world — an everlasting one

for every man, flowing from the glory of His person, the character of His testimony, and the Father's counsels respecting Him. The effect is thus final, even as His person, witness, and glory are divine.

The chapters we have had before us (John 1 - 3) are thus evidently an introduction: God revealed not in the Word alone, but in the Word made flesh, in the Son who declared the Father; His work, as God's Lamb, for the world, and His power by the Holy Ghost in man; then viewed as the centre of gathering, as the path to follow, and as the object even for the attendance of God's angels, the heaven being opened, and Jesus — not the Son of God and King of Israel only, but the Son of man — object of God's counsels. This will be displayed in the millennium, when the marriage will be celebrated, as well as the judgment executed (Jerusalem and its temple being the central point then). This, of course, supposes the setting aside of Jerusalem, its people and house, as they now are, and is justified by the great fact of Christ's death and resurrection, which is the key to all, though not yet intelligible even to the disciples. This brings in the great counterpart truth, that even God present on earth and made flesh is not enough. Man is morally judged. One must be born again for God's kingdom — a Jew for what was promised him, like another. But the Spirit would not confine His operations to such bounds, but go out freely like the wind. Nor would the rejected Christ, the Son of man; for if lifted up on the cross, instead of having the throne of David, the result would be not merely earthly blessing for His people according to prophecy, but eternal life for the believer, whoever. he might be; and this, too, as the expression of the true and full grace of God in His only-begotten Son given. John

then declared his own waning before Christ, as we have seen, the issues of whose testimony, believed or not, are eternal; and this founded on the revelation of His glorious person as man and to man here below.

John 4 presents the Lord Jesus outside Jerusalem — outside the people of promise — among Samaritans, with whom Jews had no intercourse. Pharisaic jealousy had wrought; and Jesus, wearied, sat thus at the fountain of Jacob's well in Sychar. (Ver. 1-6) What a picture of rejection and humiliation! Nor was it yet complete. For if, on the one side, God has taken care to let us see already the glory of the Son, and the grace of which He was full, on the other side, all shines out the more marvellously when we know how He dealt with a woman of Samaria, sinful and degraded. Here was a meeting, indeed, between such an one and Him, the Son, true God and eternal life. Grace begins, glory descends; "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." (Verse 1) It was strange to her that a Jew should thus humble himself: what would it have been, had she seen in Him Jesus the Son of God? "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, 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." (Verse 10) Infinite grace! infinite truth! and the more manifest from His lips to one who was a real impersonation of sin, misery, blindness, degradation. But this is not the question of grace: not what she was, but what He is who was there to win and bless her, manifesting God and the Father withal, practically and in detail. Surely He was there, a weary man outside Judaism; but God, the God of all grace, who humbled Himself to ask a drink of water of her, that He might

give the richest and most enduring gift, even water which, once drank, leaves no thirst for ever and ever — yea, is in him who drinks a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life. Thus the Holy Ghost, given by the Son in humiliation (according to God, not acting on law, but according to the gift of grace in the gospel), was fully set forth; but the woman, though interested, and asking, only apprehended a boon for this life to save herself trouble here below. This gives occasion to Jesus to teach us the lesson that conscience must be reached, and sense of sin produced, before grace is understood and brings forth fruit. This He does in verses 16-19. Her life is laid before her by His voice, and she confesses to Him that God Himself spoke to her in His words: “Sir [said she], I perceive that thou art a prophet.” If she turned aside to questions of religion, with a mixture of desire to learn what had concerned and perplexed her, and of willingness to escape such a searching of her ways and heart, He did not refrain graciously to vouchsafe the revelation of God, that earthly worship was doomed, that the Father was to be worshipped, not an Unknown. And while He does not hide the privilege of the Jews, He nevertheless proclaims that “the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” This brings all to a point; for the woman says, “I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.” And Jesus answers, “I that speak unto thee am he.” The disciples come; the woman goes into the city, leaving her waterpot, but carrying with her the unspeakable gift of God. Her testimony bore the impress of what had penetrated her

soul, and would make way for all the rest in due time. “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It was much, yet was it little of the glory that was His; but at least it was real; and to the one that has shall be given. (Verses 20-30)

The disciples marvelled that He spoke with the woman. How little they conceived of what was then said and done! “Master, eat,” said they. “But He said to them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” They entered not into His words more than His grace, but thought and spoke, like the Samaritan woman, about things of this life. Jesus explains: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, 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 true saying, 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.” (Verses 31-38)

Thus a despised Christ is not merely a crucified Son of man, and given Son of God, as in John 3, but Himself a divine giver in communion with the Father, and in the power of the Holy Ghost who is given to the believer, the source of worship, as their God and Father is its object for the worshippers in spirit and truth (though surely not to the exclusion of the Son, Heb. 1). So it must be now; for God is revealed; and the Father in grace seeks true worshippers (be they Samaritans or Jews) to worship Him. Here, accordingly, it is not so much the

means by which life is communicated, as the revelation of the full blessing of grace and communion with the Father and His Son by the Holy Ghost, in whom we are blessed. Hence it is that here the Son, according to the grace of God the Father, gives the Holy Ghost — eternal life in the power of the Spirit. It is not simply the new birth such as a saint might, and always must, have had, in order to vital relations with God at any time. Here, in suited circumstances to render the thought and way of God unmistakable, pure and boundless grace takes its own sovereign course, suitable to the love and personal glory of Christ. For if the Son (cast out, we may say, in principle from Judaism) visited Samaria, and deigned to talk with one of the most worthless of that worthless race, it could not be a mere rehearsal of what others did. Not Jacob was there, but the Son of God in nothing but grace; and thus to the Samaritan woman, not to the teachers of Israel, are made those wonderful communications which unfold to us with incomparable depth and beauty the real source, power, and character of that worship which supersedes, not merely schismatic and rebellious Samaria, but Judaism at its best. For evidently it is the theme of worship in its Christian fulness, the fruit of the manifestation of God, and of the Father known in grace. And worship is viewed both in moral nature and in the joy of communion — doubly. First, we must worship, if at all, in spirit and in truth. This is indispensable; for God is a Spirit, and so it cannot but be. Besides this, goodness overflows, in that the Father is gathering children, and making worshippers. The Father seeks worshippers. What love! In short, the riches of God’s grace are here according to the glory of the Son, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence the Lord, while fully owning the labours of all

preceding labourers, has before His eyes the whole boundless expanse of grace, the mighty harvest which His apostles were to reap in due time. It is thus strikingly an anticipation of the result in glory. Meanwhile, for Christian worship, the hour was coming and in principle come, because He was there; and He who vindicated salvation as of the Jews, proves that it is now for Samaritans, or any who believed on account of His word. Without sign, prodigy, or miracle, in this village of Samaria Jesus was heard, known, confessed as truly the Saviour of the world ("the Christ" being absent in the best authorities, ver. 42). The Jews, with all their privileges, were strangers here. They knew what they worshipped, but not the Father, nor were they "true." No such sounds, no such realities were ever heard or known in Israel. How were they not enjoyed in despised Samaria — those two days with the Son of God among them! It was meet that so it should be; for, as a question of right, none could claim; and grace surpasses all expectation or thought of man, most of all of men accustomed to a round of religious ceremonial. Christ did not wait till the time was fully come for the old things to pass away, and all to be made new. His own love and person were warrant enough for the simple to lift the veil for a season, and fill the hearts which had received Himself into the conscious enjoyment of divine grace, and of Him who revealed it to them. It was but preliminary, of course; still it was a deep reality, the then present grace in the person of the Son, the Saviour of the world, who filled their once dark hearts with light and joy.

The close of the chapter shows us the Lord in Galilee. But there was this difference from the former occasion,

that, at the marriage in Cana (John 2), the change of the water into wine was clearly millennial in its typical aspect. The healing of the courtier's son, sick and ready to die, is witness of what the Lord was actually doing among the despised of Israel. It is there that we found the Lord, in the other synoptic gospels, fulfilling His ordinary ministry. John gives us this point of contact with them, though in an incident peculiar to himself. It is our evangelist's way of indicating His Galilean sojourn; and this miracle is the particular subject that John was led by the Holy Ghost to take up. Thus, as in the former case the Lord's dealing in Galilee was a type of the future, this appears to be significant of His then present path of grace in that despised quarter of the land. The looking for signs and wonders is rebuked; but mortality is arrested. His corporeal presence was not necessary; His word was enough. The contrasts are as strong, at least, as the resemblance with the healing of the centurion's servant in Matt. 13 and Luke 7, which some ancients and moderns have confounded with this, as they did Mary's anointing of Jesus with the sinful woman's in Luke 7.

One of the peculiarities of our gospel is, that we see the Lord from time to time (and, indeed, chiefly) in or near Jerusalem. This is the more striking, because, as we have seen, the world and Israel, rejecting Him, are also themselves, as such, rejected from the first. The truth is, the design of manifesting His glory governs all; place or people was a matter of no consequence.

Here (John 5) the first view given of Christ is His person in contrast with the law. Man, under law, proved powerless; and the greater the need, the less the ability to avail himself of such merciful intervention as God

still, from time to time, kept up throughout the legal system. The same God who did not leave Himself without witness among the heathen, doing good, and giving from heaven rain and fruitful seasons, did not fail, in the low estate of the Jews, to work by providential power at intervals; and, by the troubled waters of Bethesda, invited the sick, and healed the first who stepped in of whatever disease he had. In the five porches, then, of this pool lay a great multitude of sick, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. But there was a man who had been infirm for thirty and eight years. Jesus saw the man, and knowing that he was long thus, prompts the desire of healing, but brings out the despondency of unbelief. How truly it is man under law! Not only is there no healing to be extracted from the law by a sinner, but the law makes more evident the disease, if it does not also aggravate the symptoms. The law works no deliverance; it puts a man in chains, prison, darkness, and under condemnation; it renders him a patient, or a criminal incompetent to avail himself of the displays of God's goodness. God never left Himself without witness; He did not even among the Gentiles, surely yet less in Israel. Still, such is the effect on man under law, that he could not take advantage of an adequate remedy. (Verses 1-7)

On the other hand, the Lord speaks but the word: "Rise, take up thy couch and walk." The result immediately follows. It was sabbath-day. The Jews, then, who could not help, and pitied not their fellow in his long infirmity and disappointment, are scandalized to see him, safe and sound, carrying his couch on that day. But they learn that it was his divine Physician who had not only

healed, but so directed him. At once their malice drops the beneficent power of God in the case, provoked at the fancied wrong done to the seventh day. (Verses 8-12)

But were the Jews mistaken after all in thinking that the seal of the first covenant was virtually broken in that deliberate word and warranty of Jesus? He could have healed the man without the smallest outward act to shock their zeal for the law. Expressly had He told the man to take up his couch and walk, as well as to rise. There was purpose in it. There was sentence of death pronounced on their system, and they felt accordingly. The man could not tell the Jews the name of his benefactor. But Jesus finds him in the temple, and said, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” The man went off, and told the Jews that it was Jesus: and for this they persecuted Him, because He had done these things on the sabbath. (Verses 13-16)

A graver issue, however, was to be tried; for Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. For this, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill Him; — because He added the greater offence of making Himself equal with God, by saying that God was His own Father. (Verses 17, 18)

Thus, in His person, as well as in His work, they joined issue. Nor could any question be more momentous. If He spoke the truth, they were blasphemers. But how precious the grace, in presence of their hatred and proud self-complacency! “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” They had no common thoughts, feelings, or ways with the Father and the Son. Were the Jews zealously keeping the sabbath? The Father and the Son

were at work. How could either light or love rest in a scene of sin, darkness, and misery?

Did they charge Jesus with self-exaltation? No charge could be remoter from the truth. Though He could not, would not deny Himself (and He was the Son, and Word, and God), yet had He taken the place of a man, of a servant. Jesus, therefore, answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth 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, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice 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: 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 judgment.” (Ver. 19-29)

It is evident, then, that the Lord presents life in Himself as the true want of man, who was not merely infirm but dead. Law, means, ordinances, could not meet the need — no pool, nor angel — nothing but the Son working in grace, the Son quickening. Governmental healing even from Him might only end in “some worse thing” coming. through “sin.” Life out of death was wanted by man, such as he is; and this the Father is giving in the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. This is the truth; but the Jews had the law, and hated the truth. Could they, then, reject the Son, and merely miss this infinite blessing of life in Him? Nay, the Father has given all judgment to the Son. He will have all honour the Son, even as Himself And as life is in the person of the Son, so God in sending Him meant not that the smallest uncertainty should exist for aught so momentous. He would have every soul to know assuredly how he stands for eternity as well as now. There is but one unfailing test — the Son of God — God’s testimony to Him. Therefore, it seems to me, He adds verse 24. It is not a question of the law, but of hearing Christ’s word, and believing Him who sent Christ: he that does so has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life. The Word, God (and only begotten Son in the Father’s bosom), He was eternally — Son of God, too, as born into the world. Was this false and blasphemous in their eyes? They could not deny Him to be man — Son of man. Nay, therefore it was they, reasoning, denied Him to be God. Let them learn, then, that as Son of man (for which nature they despised Him, and denied His essential personal glory) He will judge; and this judgment will be no passing visitation, such as God has accomplished by angels or men in times past.

The judgment, all of it, whether for quick or dead, is consigned to Him, because He is Son of man. Such is God's vindication of His outraged rights; and the judgment will be proportionate to the glory that has been set at nought.

Thus solemnly does the meek Lord Jesus unfold these two truths. In Him was life for this scene of death; and it is of faith that it might be by grace. This only secures His honour in those that believe God's testimony to Him, the Son of God; and to these He gives life, everlasting life now, and exemption from judgment, in this acting in communion with the Father. And in this He is sovereign. The Son gives life, as the Father does; and not merely to whom the Father will, but to whom He will. Nevertheless the Son had taken the place of being the sent One, the place of subordination in the earth, in which He would say, "My Father is greater than I." And He did accept that place thoroughly, and in all its consequences. But let them beware how they perverted it. Granted He was the Son of man; but as such, He had all judgment given Him, and would judge. Thus in one way or the other all must honour the Son. The Father did not judge, but committed all judgment into the hands of the Son, because He is the Son of man. It was not the time now to demonstrate in public power these coming, yea, then present truths. The hour was one for faith, or unbelief. Did the dead (for so men are treated, not as alive under law) — did they hear the voice of the Son of God? Such shall live. For though the Son (that eternal life who was with the Father) was a man, in that very position had the Father given Him to have life in Himself, and to execute judgment also, because He is Son of man. Judgment is the alternative for man: for God

it is the resource to make good the glory of the Son, and in that nature, in and for which man — blind to his own highest dignity — dares to despise Him. Two resurrections, one of life, and another of judgment, would be the manifestation of faith and unbelief, or rather, of those who believe, and of those who reject the Son. They were not to wonder then at what He says and does now; for an hour was coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those that have done good to resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to resurrection of judgment. This would make all manifest. Now it is that the great question is decided; now it is that a man receives or refuses Christ. If he receives Him, it is everlasting life, and Christ is thus honoured by him; if not, judgment remains which will compel the honour of Christ, but to his own ruin for ever. Resurrection will be the proof; the two-fold rising of the dead, not one, but two resurrections. Life — resurrection will display how little they had to be ashamed of, who believed the record given of His Son; the resurrection of judgment will make but too plain, to those who despised the Lord, both His honour and their sin and shame.

As this chapter sets forth the Lord Jesus with singular fulness of glory, on the side both of His Godhead and of His manhood, so it closes with the most varied and remarkable testimonies God has given to us, that there may be no excuse. So bright was His glory, so concerned was the Father in maintaining it, so immense the blessing if received, so tremendous the stake involved in its loss, that God vouchsafed the amplest and clearest witnesses. If He judges, it is not without full warning. Accordingly there is a four-fold testimony to Jesus: the

testimony of John the Baptist; the Lord's own works; the voice of the Father from heaven; and finally, the written word which the Jews had in their own hands. To this last the Lord attaches the deepest importance. This testimony differs from the rest in having a more permanent character. Scripture is, or may be, before man always. It is not a message or a sign, however significant at the moment, which passes away as soon as heard or seen. As a weapon of conviction, most justly had it in the mind of the Lord Jesus the weightiest place, little as man thinks now-a-days of it. The issue of all is, that the will of man is the real cause and spring of enmity. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." it was no lack of testimony; their will was for present honour, and hostile to the glory of the only God. They would fall a prey to Antichrist, and meanwhile are accused of Moses, in whom they trusted, without believing him; else they would have believed Christ, of whom he wrote.

In John 6 our Lord sets aside Israel in another point of view. Not only man under law has no health, but he has no strength to avail himself of the blessing that God holds out. Nothing less than everlasting life in Christ can deliver: otherwise there remains judgment. Here the Lord was really owned by the multitudes as the great Prophet that should come; and this in consequence of His works, especially that one which Scripture itself had connected with the Son of David. (Ps. 132) Then they wanted to make Him a king. It seemed natural: He had fed the poor with bread, and why should not He take His place on the throne? This the Lord refuses, and goes up the mountain to pray, His disciples being meanwhile exposed to a storm on the lake, and straining after the

desired haven till He rejoins them, when immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. (Verses 1-21)

The Lord, in the latter part of the chapter (verses 27-58), contrasts the presentation of the truth of God in His person and work with all that pertained to the promises of Messiah. It is not that He denies the truth of what they were thus desiring and attached to. Indeed, He was the great Prophet, as He was the great King, and as He is now the great Priest on high. Still the Lord refused the crown then: it was not the time or state for His reign. Deeper questions demanded solution. A greater work was in hand; and this, as the rest of the chapter shows us, not a Messiah lifted up, but the true bread given — He who comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world; a dying, not a reigning, Son of man. It is His person as incarnate first, then in redemption giving His flesh to be eaten and His blood to be drank. Thus former things pass away; the old man is judged, dead, and clean gone. A second and wholly new man appears — the bread of God, not of man, but for men. The character is wholly different from the position and glory of Messiah in Israel, according to promise and prophecy. Indeed, it is the total eclipse, not merely of law and remedial mercies, but even of promised Messianic glory, by everlasting life and resurrection at the last day. Christ here, it will be noticed, is not so much the quickening agent as Son of God (John 5), but the object of faith as Son of man — first incarnate, to be eaten; then dying and giving His flesh to be eaten, and His blood to be drank. Thus we feed on Him and drink into Him, as man, unto life — everlasting life in Him.

This last is the figure of a truth deeper than incarnation, and clearly means communion with His death. They had stumbled before, and the Lord brought in not alone His person, as the Word made flesh, presented for man now to receive and enjoy; but unless they ate the flesh, and drank the blood of the Son of man, they had no life in them. There He supposes His full rejection and death. He speaks of Himself as the Son of man in death; for there could be no eating of His flesh, no drinking of His blood, as a living man. Thus it is not only the person of our Lord viewed as divine, and coming down into the world. He who, living, was received for eternal life, is our meat and drink in dying, and gives us communion with His death. Thus, in fact, we have the Lord setting aside what was merely Messianic by the grand truths of the incarnation, and, above all, of the atonement, with which man must have vital association: he must eat — yea, eat and drink. This language is said of both, but most strongly of the latter. And so, in fact, it was and is. He who owns the reality of Christ's incarnation, receives most thankfully and adoringly from God the truth of redemption; he, on the contrary, who stumbles at redemption, has not really taken in the incarnation according to God's mind. If a man looks at the Lord Jesus as One who entered the world in a general way, and calls this the incarnation, he will surely stumble over the cross. If, on the contrary, a soul has been taught of God the glory of the person of Him who was made flesh, he receives in all simplicity, and rejoices in, the glorious truth, that He who was made flesh was not made flesh only to this end, but rather as a step toward another and deeper work — the glorifying God, and becoming our food, in death. Such are the grand emphatic points to which the Lord leads.

But the chapter does not close without a further contrast. (Verses 59-71) What and if they should see Him, who came down and died in this world, ascend up where He was before? All is in the character of the Son of man. The Lord Jesus did, without question, take humanity in His person into that glory which He so well knew as the Son of the Father.

On this basis John 7 proceeds. The brethren of the Lord Jesus, who could see the astonishing power that was in Him, but whose hearts were carnal, at once discerned that it might be an uncommon good thing for them, as well as for Him, in this world. It was worldliness in its worst shape, even to the point of turning the glory of Christ to a present account. Why should He not show Himself to the world? (Verses 3-5) The Lord intimates the impossibility of anticipating the time of God; but then He does it as connected with His own personal glory. Then He rebukes the carnality of His brethren. If His time was not yet come, their time was always ready. (Ver. 6-8) They belonged to the world. They spoke of the world; the world might hear them. As to Himself, He does not go at that time to the feast of tabernacles; but later on He goes up “not openly, but as it were in secret” (verse 10), and taught. They wonder, as they had murmured before (12-15); but Jesus shows that the desire to do God’s will is the condition of spiritual understanding. (Verses 16-18), The Jews kept not the law) and wished to kill Him who healed man in divine love. (Verses 19-23) What judgment could be less righteous? (Ver. 24) They reason and are in utter uncertainty. (Ver. 25-31) He is going where they cannot come, and never guessed (for unbelief thinks of the dispersed among the Greeks — of anything rather than

of God). (Verses 33-36) Jesus was returning to Him that sent Him, and the Holy Ghost would be given. So on the last day, that great day of the feast (the eighth day, which witnessed of a resurrection glory outside this creation, now to be made good in the power of the Spirit before anything appears to sight), the Lord stands and cries, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” (Ver. 37) It is not a question of eating the bread of God, or, when Christ died, of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Here, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” Just as in John 4, so here it is a question of power in the Holy Ghost, and not simply of Christ’s person. “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (Ver. 38) And then we have the comment of the Holy Ghost: “(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)” There is, first, the thirsty soul coming to Jesus and drinking; then there is the power of the Spirit flowing forth from the inner man of the believer in refreshment to others. (Verse 39)

Nothing can be simpler than this. Details are not called for now, but just the outline of the truth. But what we learn is, that our Lord (viewed as having entered into heaven as man on the ground of redemption, i.e., ascended, after having passed through death, into glory) from that glory confers meanwhile the Holy Ghost on him that believes, instead of bringing in at once the final feast of gladness for the Jews and the world, as He will do by-and-by when the anti-typical harvest and vintage has been fulfilled. Thus it is not the Spirit of God simply giving a new nature; neither is it the Holy Ghost given

as the power of worship and communion with His God and Father. This we have had fully before. Now, it is the Holy Ghost in the power that gives rivers of living water flowing out, and this bound up with, and consequent on, His being man in glory. Till then the Holy Ghost could not be so given — only when Jesus was glorified, after redemption was a fact. What can be more evident, or more instructive? It is the final setting aside of Judaism then, whose characteristic hope was the display of power and rest in the world. But here these streams of the Spirit are substituted for the feast of tabernacles, which cannot be accomplished till Christ come from heaven and show Himself to the world; for this time was not yet come. Rest is not the question now at all; but the flow of the Spirit's power while Jesus is on high. In a certain sense, the principle of John 4 was made true in the woman of Samaria, and in others who received Christ then. The person of the Son was there the object of divine and overflowing joy even then, although, of course, in the full sense of the word, the Holy Ghost might not be given to be the power of it for some time later; but still the object of worship was there revealing the Father; but John 7 supposes Him to be gone up to heaven, before He from heaven communicates the Holy Ghost, who should be (not here, as Israel had a rock with water to drink of in the wilderness outside themselves, nor even as a fountain springing up within the believer, but) as rivers flowing out. How blessed the contrast with the people's state depicted in this chapter, tossed about by every wind of doctrine, looking to "letters," rulers, and Pharisees, perplexed about the Christ, but without righteous judgment, assurance, or enjoyment! Nicodemus remonstrates but is spurned; all

retire to their home — Jesus, who had none, to the mount of Olives. (Verses 40-53)

This closes the various aspects of the Lord Jesus, completely blotting out Judaism, viewed as resting in a system of law and ordinances, as looking to a Messiah with present ease, and as hoping for the display of Messianic glory then in the world. The Lord Jesus presents Himself as putting an end to all this now for the Christian, though, of course, every word God has promised, as well as threatened, remains to be accomplished in Israel by-and-by; for Scripture cannot be broken; and what the mouth of the Lord has said awaits its fulfilment in its due sphere and season.

John 8 - 14.

The point at which we have arrived gives me an opportunity of saying a little on the beginning of this chapter, and the end of the last; for it is well known that many men, and, I am sorry to add, not a few Christians, have allowed appearances to weigh against John 7:53 — John 8:11 — a very precious portion of God's word. The fact is, that the paragraph of the convicted adulteress has been either simply left out in some copies of Scripture, or a blank equivalent to it appears, or it is given with marks of doubt and a good deal of variety of reading, or it is put in elsewhere. This, with many alleged verbal peculiarities, acted on the minds of a considerable number, and led them to question its title to a place in the genuine gospel of John. I do not think that the objections usually raised are here understated. Nevertheless, mature as well as minute consideration of them fails to raise the slightest doubt in my own mind, and therefore to me it seems so much the more a duty to

defend it, where the alternative is a dishonour to what I believe God has given us.

In its favour are the strongest possible proofs from such a character in itself, and such suitability to the context, as no forgery could ever boast. And these moral or spiritual indications (though, of course, only to such as are capable of apprehending and enjoying God's mind) are incomparably graver and more conclusive than any evidence of an external sort. Not that the external evidence is really weak, far from it. That which gives such an appearance is capable of reasonable, unforced, and even of what seems almost to amount to an historical solution. The meddling was probably due to human motives — no uncommon thing in ancient or modern times. With good and with bad intentions men have often tried to mend the word of God. Superstitious persons, unable to enter into its beauty, and anxious after the good opinion of the world, were afraid to trust the truth which Christ was here setting forth in deed. Augustine,4 an unimpeachable witness of facts, nearly as old as the most ancient manuscripts which omit the paragraph, tells us that it was from ethical difficulties some dropped this section out of their copies. We know for certain that dogmatic motives similarly influenced some in Luke 22:42, 43. One of the considerations, adverted to already, ought to weigh exceedingly with the believer. The account, I shall show, is exactly in harmony with the Scripture that follows it — not less so than the Lord's refusal to go up to the feast and show Himself to the world, with His words which follow on the gift of the Holy Ghost in John 7; or, again, the miracle of the miraculous bread, with the discourse appended on the needed food for the Christian in John 6. In a word, there

is here, as there, an indissoluble link of connected truth between the facts related and the communication our Lord makes afterwards in each instance respectively.

For, let me ask, what is the salient divine principle which runs through our Lord's conduct and language when the scribes and Pharisees confront Him with the woman taken in adultery? A flagrant case of sin was produced. They manifest no holy hatred of the evil, and certainly feel no pity for the sinner. "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?5 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him." Their hope was to ensnare Christ, and to leave Him only a choice of difficulties: either a useless repetition of the law of Moses, or open opposition to the law. If the latter, would it not prove Him God's adversary? If the former, would He not forfeit all His pretensions to grace? For they were well aware, that in all the ways and language of Christ, there was that which totally differed from the law and all before Him. Indeed, they counted on His grace, though they felt it not, relished it not, in no way valued it as of God; but still they so expected grace in our Lord's dealing with so heinous a sinner as the one before them, that they hoped thereby to commit Him fatally in the eyes of men. Enmity to His person was their motive. To agree with Moses or to annul him seemed to them inevitable, and almost equally prejudicial to the claims of Jesus. No doubt, they most expected that our Lord in His grace would oppose the law, and thus put Himself and grace in the wrong.

But the fact is, the grace of God never conflicts with His law, but, on the contrary, maintains its authority in its

own sphere. There is nothing which clears, establishes, and vindicates the law, and every other principle of God, so truly as His grace. Even the proprieties of nature were never so made good as when the Lord manifested grace on the earth. Take, for instance, His ways in Matthew 19. Who ever developed God's idea and will in marriage as Christ did? Who cast light on the value of a little child till Christ did? When a man left Himself, who could look so wistfully and with such love upon him as Jesus? Grace therefore is in no way inconsistent with, but maintains obligations at their true height. It is precisely thus, only still more gloriously, with our Lord's conduct on this occasion; for He weakens not in the least either the law or its sanctions, but contrariwise sheds around divine light in His own words and ways, and even applies the law with convincing power, not merely to the convicted criminal, but to the more hidden guilt of her accusers. Not a single self-righteous soul was left in that all-searching presence — none indeed of those who came about the matter, except the woman herself.

Choose for me in all Scripture a preface of fact so suited to the doctrine of the chapter that follows. The whole chapter, from first to last, beams with light — the light of God and of His word in the person of Jesus. Is not this undeniably what comes out in the opening incident? Does not Christ present Himself in discourse just after as the light of the world (so continually in John), as God's light by His word in Himself, infinitely superior even to law, and yet at the same time giving the law its fullest authority? Only a divine person could thus put and keep everything in its due place; only a divine person could act in perfect grace, but at the same time

maintain immaculate holiness, and so much the more because it was in One full of grace.

This is just what the Lord does. Therefore, when the charge was brought thus heartlessly against outward evil, He simply stoops down, and with His finger writes on the ground. He allowed them to think of the circumstances, of themselves, and of Him. As they still continued asking, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her.” And again, stooping down, He writes on the round. (Verses 6-8) The first act allows the full iniquity of their aim to be realized. They hoped, no doubt, it might be an insuperable difficulty to Him. They had time to weigh what they had said and were seeking. When they continued to ask, and He lifted Himself up and spoke to them those memorable words, He again stoops, that they might weigh them in their consciences. It was the light of God cast on their thoughts, words, and life. The words were few, simple, and self-evidencing. He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her.” The effect was immediate and complete. His words penetrated to the heart. Why did not some of the witnesses rise and do the office? What! not one? “They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, 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.” (v. 9) The law had never done this. They had learnt and trifled with the law up to this time; they had freely used it, as men do still, to convict other people. But here was the light of God shining full on their sinful condition, as well as on the law. It was the light of God that reserved all its rights to the law, but itself shone with such spiritual

force as had never reached their consciences before, and drove out the faithless hearts which desired not the knowledge of God and His ways. And this a waif tossed haphazard on the broken coast of our gospel! Nay, brethren, your eyes are at fault; it is a ray of light from Christ, and shines just where it should.

It was not exactly, as Augustine says, “Relicti sunt duo, misera, et misericordia” (In Jo. Evang. Tr., xxxiii. 5); for here the Lord is acting as light. Therefore, instead of saying, Thy sins are forgiven, He asks, “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.”6 It is not pardon, nor mercy, but light. “Go, and sin no more” (not, “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace”). Man invented such a story as this! Who since the world began, had he set to work to imagine an incident to illustrate the chapter, could or would have framed such an one as this? Where is there anything like it, that poet, philosopher, historian ever wrote, ever conceived? Produce the Protevangelion, the gospel of Nicodemus, or any other such early writing. These, indeed, are the genuine productions of man; but what a difference from that before us! Yet is it in the truest sense original, entirely distinct from any other fact, either in the Bible, or anywhere else, not, of course, excepting John himself. Nevertheless, its air, scope, and character can be proved, I think, to suit John, and no other; and this particular context in John, and no other. No theory is less reasonable than that this can be either a mere floating tradition stuck in here by some chance, or the work of a forger’s mind. I do not think it harsh, but charitable to speak thus plainly; for the course of

incredulity is now running strong' and Christians can hardly avoid hearing of these questions. I therefore do not refuse this opportunity of leading any simple souls to see how truly divine the whole bearing of this portion is — how exactly apposite to that which the Lord insists on throughout the chapter. For, immediately after, we have doctrine unfolded which, no doubt, goes farther, but is intimately connected, as no other chapter is, with the story.7 Next, the idea of many distinct and independent texts (as distinguished from abundance of various readings) seems an evident exaggeration. Take the fact, that this is eked out by putting the Received Text as one; the text of D (or Beza's Cambridge Uncial) as another; and that of most of the MSS. E F G H K M S U, etc., as a third. Now, what right has the Received Text to be thus ranged? It was formed by collating some of those very manuscripts which are thrown together as a third text. The true conclusion, therefore, is simply the not at all unprecedented phenomenon that D differs considerably from almost if not all other manuscripts, and that the Received Text is but a poor approximation to a text based on a collation of manuscripts. A really standard text, which gives just but discriminating value to an worthy witnesses, is as yet a desideratum.

Thirdly, what the contents of the passage are which countenances the notion that there is some inherent defect in the text to invalidate its claim to a place in the sacred narrative I cannot divine, as it is not here explained.

The fourth objection is the very general concurrence of the MSS. that contain the passage in placing it here. Why this place, of all others, should have been selected, will be no difficulty to those who feel with me; but, on

the contrary, in my judgment, it refutes the “desperate resource” (as it is even allowed to be, strange to say, by those who adopt it), that the evangelist may have in this solitary case incorporated a portion of the current oral tradition into his narrative, which was afterwards variously corrected from the gospel to the Hebrews, or other traditional sources, and from different diction put in at the end of Luke 21, or elsewhere. I am convinced, that where there is a real understanding of John 8 as a whole, the opening incident will be felt to be a necessary exordium of fact before the discourse which, to my mind, manifestly and certainly grew out of it, as surely as it happened then, and at no other time. Lastly, the mind which could conceive that the fact, as well as the tone or the moral drift of this incident, fits in to the end of Luke 21 rather than to the beginning of John 8, seems so decidedly imaginative, that reasoning is here out of place, particularly as it is allowed, along with this, that its occurrence here (spite of the evidence of some cursive MSS. for Luke 21) seems much in its favour. Lastly, I have examined with care, and satisfied myself, that the alleged weightiest argument against the passage, in its entire diversity from the style of John’s narrative, is superficial and misleading. Some peculiar words are required by the circumstance; and the general cast and character of the passage, so far from being alien to the evangelist’s manner, seems to me, on the contrary, in his spirit, rather than in any other inspired writer’s, no matter in — which of the manuscripts we read it. D is the copy which makes the chief inroads; this is a common thing with that venerable, but most faulty document.

Jesus spoke again to them (the interrupters having disappeared). “I am the light of the world.” He had just acted as light among those who had appealed to law; He here goes on, but widens the sphere. He says, “I am the light of the world.” it is not merely dealing with scribes and Pharisees. Further, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The life was the light of men, the perfect display and guide of the life He was to His followers. The law never is this — good if a man use it lawfully, but not for a righteous man whose Christ is. So Christ tells the Pharisees who objected that He knew whence He came, and whither He was going: they were in the dark, and knew nothing of it. They were in the unrelieved darkness of the world, they judged after the flesh. Not so Jesus: He did not judge. Yet, if He did, His judgment was true; for He was not alone, but His Father was with Him. And their law bid them bow to two witnesses. But what witnesses? His testimony was so decided, that the reason why they did not then lay hands on Him was simply this — His hour was not yet come. (Verses 12-20)

The Lord throughout the chapter speaks with more than usual solemnity, and with increasing plainness to His enemies, who knew neither Him nor His Father. They should die in their sins; and whither He went, they could not come. They were from beneath — of this world; He from above, and not of this world.

The truth is, that throughout the gospel He speaks as One consciously rejected, but morally judging all things as the Light. He therefore does not scruple to push things to an extremity, to draw out their real character and state most distinctly; to pronounce on them as from beneath, as He Himself from above; to show that there

was no resemblance between them and Abraham, but rather Satan, and not the smallest communion in their thoughts with His Father's. Hence it is, too, that later on He lets them know that the time is coining when they should know who He was, but too late. He is the rejected light of God, and light of the world, from the first, and all through; but, more than this, He is the light of God, not only in deed, but in His word; as elsewhere He let them know they would be judged by it in the last day. Hence, when they asked Him who He was, He answers them to that effect; and I refer to it the more, because the force is imperfectly given, and even wrongly, in verse 25: "Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." Not only is there no need of adding "the same," but there is nothing that answers to "from the beginning." And this, again, has involved our translators in a change of tense, which is not merely uncalled for, but spoils the true idea. Our Lord does not refer to what He had said at or from any starting-point, but to what He speaks always, as then also. In every respect the sense of the Holy Ghost is enfeebled, changed, and even destroyed in the common version. What our Lord did answer is incomparably more forcible, and in exact accordance with the doctrine of the chapter, and the incident that begins it. They asked Him who He was. His answer is this: "Absolutely that which I also am speaking to you." I am thoroughly, essentially what I also speak. It is not only that He is the light, and that there is no darkness in Him — as there is none in God, so none in Him; but, as to the principle of His being, He is what He utters. And, indeed, of Him only is this true. A Christian may be said to be light in the Lord; but of none, save Jesus, could it be said, that the word he discourses is the

expression of what he is. Jesus is the truth. Alas! we know that, so false is human nature and the world, nothing but the power of the Spirit, revealing Christ to us through the Word, keeps us even as believers from departure into error, misconduct, and evil of any kind. None but One could say, “I am what I speak.” And this is precisely what Christ is showing throughout the scene. He was the light to convict the doers of darkness, however hidden; He was the light which made others — no matter what they might have been in the world — to be light, if they followed Himself, God manifest in flesh. He manifested God, and made man manifest also. Everything was manifested by the light. Who is He? “Absolutely (τὴν ἀρχὴν) what I speak.” What He utters in speech is what He is. There was not the smallest deflection from the truth; His every word and way declared it. There was never the appearance of what He was not. He is always, and in every particular, what He speaks.

How entirely this falls in with what we have elsewhere, does not need to be pressed. We see farther on the same doctrine, only ever expanding; revelation clearer, and more antagonistic to more and more determined unbelief. He lets them know, that when they have lifted up the Son of man, then they shall know that Jesus is He (the truth would be thoroughly out), “and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” It is not miracles here, but the truth. He not only is the truth in His own person, but He speaks it. He speaks it to the world also; for all through John’s gospel, although it be the eternal life that was with the Father, the Word that was with God in the beginning, still, He is also (from John 1:14) a man on

earth — a real, true man here below, however truly God. And so it is in this chapter. It began by showing that He is so in act; then it opens out that He is so in word. He said to the world what He heard from Him that sent Him — as they rightly understood, from the Father.

He pursues the same line in dealing with the Jews who believed in Him (verse 31): “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: 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 for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Thus His word (not the law) is the sole means of knowing the truth and its liberty. It was not merely a question of commands, or of something God wanted from man. That had been given, and tried; and what was the end of it for them and Him? Now much more was at stake, even the manifestation of God in Christ to the world, and this also in His word, in the truth. It became a test, therefore, of the truth; and if they continued in His word, they should be His disciples indeed; and should know the truth, and the truth should make them free.

But then there is another thing required to set free, or rather which does à fortiori set free. The truth learnt in the word of Jesus is the only foundation. But if received, it is not merely that I have the truth, so to speak, as an expression of His mind, but of Himself — of His person. Hence it is that He touches on this point in verse 36: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free

indeed.” It is not merely, then, the truth making free, but the Son. He who pretends to receive the truth, but does not bow before the glory of the Son, proves that there is no truth in him. He that receives the truth might at first be very ignorant; the truth may be, then, nothing more than that which lets in the light of God graciously, but in a limited measure. It is rarely that all at once the full glory of Christ bursts in upon the soul. As with the disciples, so it might be with any soul now. There might be real, but gradual perception; but the truth invariably works thus, where God is the teacher. Then, as light increases, and the glory of Christ shines more distinctly, the heart welcomes Him; and so much the more rejoices as He is exalted. On the contrary, where it is not the truth, but theory or tradition — a mere reasoning or sentiment about Christ, the heart is offended by the full presentation of His glory, stumbles at it, and turns away from Him, just because it cannot bear the strength and brightness of that divine fulness which was in Christ: it knows not God, nor Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Eternal life is unknown and unenjoyed.

Further, the Lord brings out here another thing worthy of all attention; especially as the same principle runs through from the incident at the beginning of the chapter. It is not merely light, truth, and the Son known in the person of Christ, but also as contrasted with the law. Did they boast in the law? What place had they under it? Slaves! Yes, and they were faithless to it; they broke the law; they were slaves of sin. It is not the slave, but the Son, who abides in the house. Thus the law is not in any way lowered, but at the same time there is the bright contrast of Christ with it. The law has its just place; it is for servants, and deals with them justly. The

consequence is, there is no permanence for them, any more than liberty. Law could not meet the case; nothing, and none short of the Son. “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” Was not this precisely what He had brought home to the conscience at the beginning of the chapter? Before God (and He was God) it was not what the poor woman had done that was all, but what they were, and they were convicted of sin; they were not without sin. He had said, “The servant abideth not in the house;” and this was precisely the case with them; they were obliged to go.8 “But the Son abideth ever,” and so He does in the best, and highest, and truest estate. Thus the doctrine entirely harmonizes with the fact, and in a way that does not appear at first sight, but only as we look into it a little more closely, and search into the depths of the living word of God, though none of us can boast of the progress we have made. Nevertheless, we may be permitted to say, that the more closely we are given of God to apprehend the truth, the more the divine perfectness of the entire picture becomes manifest to our souls.

I need not go through the particulars which the Lord brings out in laying bare the condition of the Jews, the seed (not the children) of Abraham, but really of their father the devil, and manifesting it in the two characters of liar and murderer. They did not know His speech, because they could not hear His word. The truth meant is the key to the outer vehicle of it — just the reverse of man’s knowledge. In fine, all is shown in its true essential character here, the convicted one and her accusers, the Jews, the world, the disciples, the truth, the Son, Satan himself, God Himself. Not only is Abraham9 seen truly (not as misrepresented in his

seed), but One who was greater than “our father” Abraham, who would say, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing; but who could say (with a verily, verily), “BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.” He is the light in deed and word. He says so. Then He deals with them, convicting them more and more. He shows that the truth is found here only in His word. He, the witness, testifies that He is the Son. But the chapter does not end before He announces His eternal Godhead. He is God Himself, yet hides Himself when they took up stones to stone Him. His hour was not yet come. This is the truth of them, as of Him. He was God. Such is the truth. Short of this, we have not the truth of Christ. But it is the growing rejection of Christ’s word that leads Him on step by step to the assertion that He was very God, though a man upon the earth.

Like the preceding, John 9 shows us the Lord rejected — here in His work, as there in His word. The difference a little answers to what we have seen in John 5, 6. In the fifth chapter He is the quickening Son of God; but all testimonies are vain, and judgment awaits the unbeliever — a resurrection of judgment. In John 6. He is seen as the suffering Son of man, who takes the place of humiliation, instead of the kingdom which they wanted to force on Him. But no; this was not the purpose for which He had come, though true in its own time; but what He took, and took because His eye was ever single, viewed as man, was for God’s glory, not for His own; and the real glory of God in a ruined world is only met by the service and death of the Son of man dying for sinners and for sin. Somewhat similarly in John 8 He is the rejected Word, who confesses Himself (when most scorned and men are ready to stone Him) to be the

everlasting God Himself. As man becomes more hardened in unbelief, Christ becomes more pointed and plain in the assertion of the truth. Thus the more it is pressed down, the more the brightness of the truth makes its way out, that He is God. They had fully heard now who He was, and therefore must He be ignominiously cast out. His words brought God too close, too really; and they would not bear them.

But now He is rejected in another way, and in this it is as man, though declaring Himself and worshipped as Son of God. We shall see that there is stress on His manhood, more especially as the necessary mould or form which divine grace took to effect the blessing of man, to work the works of God in grace on the earth. Accordingly, here it is not merely that man is seen to be guilty, but blind from his birth. Doubtless there is light that discovers man in his evil and. unbelief; but man is sought and met by His grace; for here the man had no thought of being healed — never asked Jesus to heal him. There was no cry here to the Son of David. This we hear most properly in the other gospels, which develop the last offer of the Messiah to the Jews. In every one of the gospels, indeed, we have Him finally presented as the Son of David; and therefore, although it be the proper province of Matthew, yet inasmuch as all the synoptic gospels dwell on our Lord at the close as Son of David, all the gospels give the story of the blind man at Jericho. Matthew, however, gives blind men over and over again, crying to Him, “Son of David.” The reason is, I suppose, that not merely is He so presented at the last, but all through in Matthew. In John this case does not appear at all; no blind man cries to the Son of David throughout. What is brought before us in the man, blind

from his birth, is a wholly different truth. It was, indeed, the most desperate case. Instead of the man looking to Christ, it is Christ that looks at the man, without a single cry or appeal to Him. It is absolute grace. If it be not the Father seeking, at any rate it is the Son. It is One who had deigned to become man in love to man. He is seeking, though rejected, to display the grace of God toward this poor blind beggar in his abject need: “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?”

They had nothing better than Jewish thoughts about the case. But all through the gospel of John Christ is setting aside these thoughts on every side, whether in enquirers outside, or more particularly in disciples, who were under this pernicious influence like other people. Here the Lord answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.” The ways of God are not as man’s; and their revelation stands in contrast with Jewish notions of retributive justice. The reason lay deeper than what his parents deserved, or the foresight of what he would do amiss. Not that the man and his parents were not sinners; but the eye of Jesus saw beyond nature, or law, or government, in the man’s blindness from his birth. To divine goodness, the inner and true and ultimate reason, God’s reason — if one may be permitted such a phrase — was to furnish an opportunity for Christ to work the works of God on the earth. How blessedly grace operates in, and judges of, a hopeless case! That it was wholly outside the resources of man made it just the occasion for Jesus, for the works of God. This is the point of the chapter — Jesus working the works of God in free

unconditional grace. In John 8 the prominent feature. is the word of God; here, the works of God made effectual and manifest in grace. “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day.” Therefore can one say, that it is unqualified grace, because it is not merely God mercifully answering man’s appeal, and blessing man’s work, but God sending, and Christ working. “I must work the works of him that sent me.” What grace (save in Jesus all through) can be compared with this? Jesus, then, was doing this work “while it is day.” Day was while He was present with them. Night was coming, which would be, for the Jew, the personal absence of the Messiah; indeed, such for any would be the departure of the Son of God. “The night cometh when no man can work.” (Verse 4) Higher things might follow in their season, and brighter light suited to them when the day should dawn, and the day-star arise in hearts established with grace. But here it is the time of the absence of Jesus in contrast with His presence on earth as He then was. “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (Verse 5)

This establishes very plainly the fact, that these two chapters are so far linked together, in that they look at Christ as light, and the light of the world too. But, far from being confined to Israel, it rather sets aside the Jewish system, which assumes to order things justly now according to man’s conduct, thus ignoring man’s ruin by sin, and God’s grace in Christ as the sole deliverance. Here it is not so much the light by the word convicting man, and bringing out God’s nature and the reality of His own personal glory, but “the light of the world” as manifesting God graciously working in power contrary to nature. It was a question not of light for eyes, but of

giving power to see the light to one wholly and evidently incapable of seeing as he was. Hence we do well to remark the peculiarity in the Lord's manner of working. He lays clay upon the man's eyes; an extraordinary step at first sight. In truth, it was the shadow of Himself become man, an apt figure of the human body which He took in order therein to do God's will. He was not simply Son of God, but Son of God possessed of a body prepared of God. (Heb. 10) He became man; and yet the fact of the body of Christ — of God's Son being found in fashion as a man — only and greatly increases the difficulty at first sight, because nobody, apart from the word of God, would look for a divine person in such a guise. But when faith bows to the word, and accepts the will of God in it, how precious the grace, how wise the ordering yea, how indispensable it is learnt to be! So with the man already blind before. Putting the plaster of clay over his eyes did not at once mend his blindness in the least; but, if anything, the contrary — would have hindered his seeing, had he seen before. But when he goes at the word of Jesus, and washes in the pool of Siloam — that is, when the word is applied in the Holy Ghost to his case, revealing Jesus as the sent One of God (compare John 5:24), all was so far plain. It was not a mere man who had spoken; he apprehended in Jesus One Sent (for the pool to which the Lord directed the man to wash his clay-covered eyes in was called "Siloam;" that is, it bore the very name of "sent"). It was then understood that Jesus had a mission on earth to work the works of God. Though, of course, man born of a woman, He was more than human: He was the Sent One — the Sent of the Father in love into this world, to work effectually where man was entirely incapable even of helping in any way.

Thus the truth was in process of application, so to speak. The man goes his way, washes, and comes seeing. The word of God explains this mystery. The Son's taking humanity is ever a blinding fact to nature; but he who is not disobedient to the word will assuredly not fail to find in the acknowledgment of the truth Christ's glory under His manhood, as well as the need of his own soul met with a power and promptness which answers, as it is due, to His glory who wrought in grace here below.

Nevertheless, the word of the Lord tried him as ever; other hearts were tested by it too. The neighbours were astonished, and questions arise; the Pharisees are stirred but divided (for this miracle, also, was wrought on a sabbath). The parents being summoned, as well as himself questioned, all stand to the great and indisputable fact: the man just healed was their child, and he had been born blind. The man indeed witnessed what he believed of Jesus, and the threat of the consequences was only made the clearer, even though there was a total avoidance of all dangerous answers on the parents' part, and a determination to reject Christ and those who confessed Him in the Pharisees. The work of grace was hated, and especially because it was wrought on the sabbath day. For this bore solemn witness, that in the truth of things before God there was no sabbath possible for them: He must work if man was to be delivered and blessed. Of course, there was the holy form, and there was no doubt as to the duty; but if God revealed Himself on earth, neither forms nor duties, paid after a sort by sinful men, could hide the awful reality that man was incapable of keeping such a sabbath as God could recognise. The day had been sanctified from the beginning; the duty of the Jew was

unquestionable; but sin was man's state; — after every remedial measure, he was thoroughly and only evil continually.

In fact, so far the Jew quite understood, as far as that went, the moral meaning of the Lord's working thus both either on the impotent man before, and now on the blind man. For such deeds on the sabbath did pronounce sentence of death on that whole system, and on the great badge of relationship between God and Israel. If Jesus was true God as well as man, if He was really the light of the world, yet wrought on the sabbath day, there was plain evidence on God's part of what He thought of Israel. They felt it to be a matter of life and death. But the man was led on by these conscienceless attacks, as is always the case where there is simple faith. The effort to destroy the person of Christ and to undermine His glory only developed, in the goodness of God, that divine work which had already touched his soul, as well as given him eyes to see. Thus was his faith exercised and cleared, side by side with the unbelief and hostility of the enemies of Christ. The consequence is, that we have a beautiful history in this chapter of the man led on step by step; first owning the work the Lord had wrought with simplicity, and therefore in force of truth: what he does not know he owned with just the same frankness. Then, when the Pharisees were divided, and he was appealed to once more, "He is a prophet" was his distinct answer. Then, when the fact was only the more established by the parents, spite of their timidity, the hypocritical effort to honour God at the expense of Jesus draws out the most withering refutation (not without a taunt) from him who had been blind. (Verses 24-33) This

closed, they could not answer, and cast him out. (Verse 34)

How beautiful to mark the Spirit's love, dwelling fully and minutely on a blind beggar taught of God, thus gradually and evermore beating their in credulous objections smaller than when they cast him out as dirt in the streets! What a living picture of the new witness for Christ! A character plain, honest, energetic, not always the most gracious, but certainly confronted with the most heartless and false of adversaries. But if the man finds himself out of the synagogue, he is soon in the presence of Christ. The religious world of that day could not endure a witness of divine power and grace which they themselves, feeling not the need, denied, denounced, and did all they could to destroy. Outside them, but with Jesus, he learns more deeply than ever, so as to fill his soul with profound joy and gladness, that the wondrous healer of his blindness was not merely a prophet, but the Son of God — just object of faith and worship. Thus clearly we have in this case the rejection of Jesus viewed, not in open attack on His own person, as in the. chapter before, where they took up stones to stone Him, but here rather in His friends, whom He had first met in sovereign grace, and did not let them go till fully blessed, ending in Jesus worshipped outside the synagogue as the Son of God. (Verses 38-40)

Then the Lord declares the issues of His coming. "For judgment," He says, "I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." In this gospel He]lad said before, that it was to save and give life, not to judge, that He came. Such was the aim of His heart, at all cost to Himself; but the effect was moral in one way or the

other, and this now. Manifest judgment awaits the evil by-and-by. 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, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." They were offended at the notion of their not seeing. Did they insist that they saw? The Lord admits the plea. If they felt their sin and shortcoming, there might be a hope. As it was, then, sin remained. The boast, like the excuse, of unbelief is invariably the ground of divine judgment.

John 10 pursues the subject and opens out into a development, not of the spiritual history of a sheep of Christ, but of the Shepherd Himself, from first to last, here below. Hence, the Lord does not rest in a judgment extorted by their unbelief, and in contrast with the deliverance of faith, but develops the ways of grace here, as always in marked antithesis with the Jewish system, though connected with the man for His sake turned out of the synagogue, then found by Himself, and led into the fullest perception of His own glory outside the Jews, where alone real worship is possible. Accordingly our Lord traces this new history — His own from the beginning.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." It was not so with Jesus. He had entered in by the door, according to every requisition of the Scriptures. Although Son, He had submitted to each ordinance which God had laid down for the Shepherd of His earthly people. He accomplished the work that God had marked out for Him in prophecy and type. What had been required or stipulated,

according to the law, that had He not rendered in full tale? He was born at the measured time, in the due place, from the sworn stock, and of the defined mother, according to the written word. God had taken care beforehand to make each important point plain, by which the true Christ of God was to be recognised; and all had been fulfilled thus far in Jesus — thus far; for it is quite allowed that all the prophecies of subjugation and judgment, with the reign over the earth, remain to be accomplished. “To him,” He says, “the porter openeth.” This had been realized. Witness the Holy Ghost’s action in Simeon and Anna, not to speak of the mass; and, above all, in John the Baptist. God had wrought by His grace in Israel, and there were godly hearts prepared for Him there.

“And the sheep hear his voice.” (Verse 3) So we find in the gospels, particularly Luke’s, from the beginning. And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” — an evident allusion to what had befallen the blind man. No doubt he had been turned out of the synagogue; but Christ imprints, on this, their wicked act, His own interpretation, according to divine counsels. Little did the man know at that painful moment, that it was in reality grace which was leading him out. If it was a little before His own public and final rejection, it was, after all, the same principle at the bottom. The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. “He goeth before them.” This seems to refer to the manner in which it had been, and should be, accomplished. Already had the Lord tasted the enmity and scorn of man, and especially of the Jews; but He also knew the depths of shame and suffering which He must soon pass through,

before there was an open separation of the sheep. Thus, whether it were done virtually or formally, in either case Jesus went before, and the sheep followed; “for they know his voice.” This is their spiritual instinct, as it is their security — not skill in determining or refuting error, but simple cleaving to Christ and the truth. See this exemplified in the once blind man. What weight had the Pharisees with his conscience? None whatever. They, on the contrary, felt he taught them. “A stranger will they not follow,” any more than he would follow the Pharisees. For now, by the new eyes which the Lord had given him, he could discern their vain pretensions, and their hostility against Jesus so much the worse, because coupled with “Give God the praise.” “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him” — not because they are learned in the injurious jargon of strangers, “for they know not the voice of strangers.” They know the Shepherd’s voice, and this they follow. It is the love of what is good, and not skill in finding out what is evil. Some may have power to sift and discern the unsound; but this is not the true, direct, divine means of safety for the sheep of Christ. There is a much more real, immediate, and sure way. It is simply this: they cannot rest without the voice of Christ; and that which is not the voice of Christ they do not follow. What more suitable to them, or more worthy of Him?

As these things were not understood, the Lord opens out the truth still more plainly in what follows. Here (verse 7) He begins by taking the place of “the door of the sheep;” not, be it observed, of the sheepfold, but of the sheep. He had entered in Himself by the door, not of the sheep, of course, but by the door into the sheepfold. He entered in according to each sign and token — moral,

miraculous, prophetic, or personal — which God had given to His ancient people to know Him by. But enter as He might, the people who broke the law refused the Shepherd; and the end of it was, that He leads His own sheep outside, Himself going before them. Now, there is more, and He says, “I am the door of the sheep.” The contrast of pretended or merely human shepherds is given in the next verse, which is parenthetical. “All that ever came before me [such as Theudas and Judas] are thieves and robbers [they secretly or openly enriched themselves by the sheep]: but the sheep did not hear them.”

In verse 9 He enlarges. “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” The portion He gives the sheep is a contrast with the law in another way; not as light simply, as in the beginning of John 8, in detecting all sin and every sinner. Now, it is grace in its fulness. “By me,” He says — not by circumcision, or the law — “By me if any man enter in.” There was no question of entering in by the law; for it dealt with those who were already in a recognised relation with God. But now there is an invitation to those without. “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Salvation is the first need of a sinner, and certainly the Gentile needs it as much as the Jew. “By me if any man” — no matter who he may be, if he enter, he shall be saved. Nevertheless, it is only for those that enter in. There is no salvation for such as abide outside Christ. But this is not all; for grace with Christ freely gives, not salvation alone, but all things. Even now, too, “he shall go in and out.” It is not only that there is life and salvation in Christ, but there is liberty, in contrast with the law. “And he shall find

pasture.” Besides, there is food assured. Thus we have here an ample provision for the sheep. To him that enters by Christ there is salvation, there is liberty, there is food.

Again, the Lord contrasts others with Himself. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” By their fruits they should know them. How could the sheep trust such shepherds as these? “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” There had been life when there was only a promise; there had been life all through the dealings of law. Clearly Christ had ever been the means of life from the day death entered the world. But now He was come, it was not only that they might have life, but that they might have it “more abundantly.” This was the effect of the presence of God’s Son in this world. Was it not right and becoming, that when the Son of God did humble Himself in this world, even to death, the death of the cross, dying also in atonement for sinners, God should mark this infinite fact and work and person by an incomparably richer blessing than ever had been diffused before? I cannot conceive it otherwise than the Word shows it is, consistently with the glory of God, even the Father.

Further, He was not only the door of the sheep, and then the door for others to enter in, but He says (verse 11), “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” It is no longer only in contrast with a thief or a robber, with murderous intent or evidently selfish purposes of the worst kind, but there might be others characterised by a milder form of human iniquity — not destroyers of the sheep, but self-seeking men. “He that. is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own

the sheep are not, 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." Christ, as the good shepherd, does nothing of the kind, but remains to suffer all for them, instead of running away when the wolf came. "I am the good shepherd, and know those that are mine, and am known by mine, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." Such is the true sense of the verse. The 14th and 15th verses really form one sentence. They are not divided as we have them in our Bibles. The meaning is, that He showed Himself as the good Shepherd because He knew the sheep, and was known of them, just. as He knew the Father, and was known of the Father. The mutuality of knowledge between the Father and the Son is the pattern of the knowledge between the Shepherd and the sheep. In what a wondrous. place this puts us and the character of knowledge we possess. The knowledge which grace gives to the sheep is so truly divine that the Lord has nothing to compare it with, except the knowledge that exists between the Father and the Son. Nor is it merely a question of knowledge, intimate and perfect and divine as it is; but, moreover, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Other sheep, too, He intimates here, He had, who were to be brought in, that did not belong to the Jewish fold; He clearly looks out into the world, as always in the gospel of John. There was to be one flock (not fold), one Shepherd.

Moreover, in order to open yet more the ineffable complacency of the Father in His work abstractedly, He adds, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." Not here "for the sheep," but simply,

“that I might take it again.” (Verse 17) That is to say, besides laying down His life for the sheep, He laid down His life to prove His perfect confidence in His Father. Impossible for another, or all others, to give so much. Even He could not give more than His life. Any other thing would not be comparable to the laying down of His life. It was the most complete, absolute giving up of Himself; and He did give up Himself, not merely for the gracious end of winning the sheep to God from the spoiler, but with the still more blessed and glorious aim of manifesting, in a world where man had from the first dishonoured God, His own perfect confidence in His Father, and this as man. He laid it down that He might take it again. Thus, instead of continuing His life in dependence on His Father, He gives it up out of a still profounder and truly absolute dependence. “Therefore,” says He, “doth my Father love me.” This becomes a positive ground for the Father to love Him, additional to the perfection which had ever been seen in Him all His pathway through. Even more than this; although it is so expressly an act of His own, another astonishing principle is seen — the union of absolute devotedness on His own part, in perfect freeness of His will, with obedience. (Verse 18) Thus the very same act may be, and is (as we find it in all its perfection in Christ) His own will, and yet along with this simple submission to His Father’s commandment. In truth, He and the Father were one; and so He does not stop till we have this fully expressed in verse 30. He and His Father were one — one in everything; not only in love and gracious counsel for the sheep, but in nature, too — in that divine nature which, of course, was the ground of all the grace.

But, besides this, the unbelief of the Jews brings out another thing; that is, the perfect security of the sheep — a very important question, because He was going to die. His death is in view: what will the sheep do then? Would the death of Christ in any way imperil the sheep? The very reverse. The Lord declares this in a most distinct manner. He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (Verses 27, 28) First of all, the life is everlasting. But then it is not merely that the thing itself is eternal, but they shall never perish; for it might be pretended, that though the life lasts for ever, this is conditional on something in its recipients. Nay, “they shall never perish” — the sheep themselves. Thus, not merely the life, but those who have it by grace in Christ, shall never perish. To conclude and crown all, as far as their security was concerned, the question is answered as to any hostile power. What about some one external to them? Nay; there again, as there was no internal source of weakness that could jeopard the life, so there should be no external power to cause anxiety. If there was any power that might do so righteously, surely it must be God’s own; but, contrariwise, they were in the Father’s hand, no less than in the Son’s hand — none could pluck them out. Thus the Lord fenced them round even by His death, as well as by that eternal life which was in Him, the superiority of which over death was proved by His authority to take it again in resurrection. This was the life more abundantly which they derived from Him. Why should any one wonder at its power? He was, for the sheep, against all adversaries; and so was the Father. Yea, “I and the Father are one.” (Verses 29, 30)

As there had been a division among the Jews for His sayings, and their appeal in doubt to Him had drawn out both His treatment of them as unbelievers, and the security of the sheep who heeded His voice and followed Him, as He knew them (ver. 19-30) so our Lord, in the presence of their hatred and still growing enmity (ver. 31), convicts them of the futility of their objection on their own ground. Did they find fault because He took the place of being the Son of God? Yet they must allow that kings, governors, judges, according to their law, were called 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?” A fortiori had He not a place which no king ever had? Did He, on their own principles, blaspheme then, because He said He was the Son of God? But He goes far beyond this. If they regarded not God’s word, nor His words, He appeals to His works. “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.” This connects, as I apprehend, the tenth chapter with the foregoing, and is in contrast with the eighth. They had thus repeatedly sought to kill Him, and He abandons them for the place in which John first baptized. In the face of total rejection, and in every point of view, both as the expression of God in the world, and of His working the works of grace in the world, the result was plain. Man, the Jew especially, settles down in resolute unbelief and deadly hostility; but, on the other hand, the indefeasible security of the sheep, the objects of grace, only comes out with so much the greater clearness and decision.

Nevertheless, though all was really closed, God would manifest by a full and final testimony what was the glory of Christ, rejected as He was, and previous to His death. And accordingly, in John 11 and 12 is given a strikingly rich presentation of the Lord Jesus, in many respects entirely differing from all the others; for while it embraces what is found in the synoptists (that is, the accomplishment of prophecy in His offer of Himself to Zion as the Son of David), John brings in a fulness of personal glory that is peculiar to his gospel.

Here we begin with that which John alone records — the resurrection of Lazarus. Some have wondered that it appears only in the latest gospel; but it is given there for a very simple and conclusive reason. The resurrection of Lazarus was the most distinct testimony possible, near Jerusalem, in the face of open Jewish enmity. It was the grandest demonstrative proof that He was the Son of God, determined to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Who but He on earth could say, I am the resurrection and the life? Who had ever looked for more in Messiah Himself than Martha did — raising up the dead at the last day?

Here I may just observe, that Romans 1:4 does not restrict the meaning to the fact that He was determined to be the Son of God with power by His own resurrection. This is not what the verse states, but that resurrection of the dead, or the raising of dead persons, was the great proof that defined Him to be the Son of God with power. No doubt His own resurrection was the most astonishing instance of it; but His raising of dead persons in His ministry was a witness also, as the resurrection of His saints by-and-by will be the display

of it. Hence the verse in Romans 1 expresses the truth in all its extent, and without specifying any one in particular. So Lazarus, as being the most conspicuous case of resurrection any where appearing in the gospels, except Christ's own, which all give, was the fullest testimony that even John rendered to that great truth. Hence, then, as one might expect from its character, the account is given with remarkable development in that gospel which is devoted to the personal glory of Jesus as the Son of God. To this attaches the revelation of the resurrection, and the life in Him as a, present thing, superior to all questions of prophetic time, or dispensations. It could be found nowhere else so appropriately as in John. The difficulty, therefore, in its occurrence here and not elsewhere, is really none whatever to any one who believes the object of God as apparent in the gospels themselves.

But, then, there is another feature that meets us in the story. Christ was not only the Son of God, but the Son of man. He was the Son of God, and a perfect man, in absolute dependence on His Father. He was not to be acted upon by any feeling, except the will of God. Thus He carries His divine sonship into His position as a man on earth, and He never allows that the glory of His person should in the smallest degree interfere with the completeness of His dependence and obedience. Hence, when the Lord hears the call, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" — the strongest possible appeal to the heart for acting at once on it — He does not go. His answer is most calm, and, if God be not before us, to mere human feeling it might seem indifferent. It was not so, but was utter perfection. "This sickness," He says, "is not unto death." Events might seem to contradict

this; appearances might say it was to death, but Jesus was and is the truth always. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” And so it was. “Now, Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Whatever, therefore, it might appear, His affection was unquestionable. But, then, there are other and even deeper principles. His love for Mary, for Martha, and for Lazarus weakened in no respect His dependence on God; He waited on His Father’s direction. So, “when he heard 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 Judea again. They say, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? 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.” In Jesus there was nothing but perfect light. He was Himself the light. He walked in the sunshine of God. He was the very perfection of that which is only partially true with us in practice. “If, then, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Indeed, He was the light, as well as full of it. Walking accordingly in this world, He waited for the word of His Father. At once, when this came, He says, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” There was no darkness in Him. All is plain, and He go” forth promptly with the knowledge of all He is going to do.

Then we have the ignorant thoughts of the disciples, though not unmixed with devotedness to His person. Thomas proposes that they should go to die with him.

How marvellous is the unbelief even of the saints of God! He was going really to raise the dead; their only thought was to go and die with him. Such was a disciple's sombre anticipation. Our Lord does not say a word about it at the moment, but calmly leaves the truth to correct the error in due time. Then we have the wonderful interview with the sisters; and, finally, our Lord is at the grave, a consciously divine person, the Son of the Father, but in the perfectness of manhood, yet with such deep feeling as Deity alone could produce — not only sympathy with sorrow, but, above all, the sense of what death is in this world. Indeed, our Lord did not raise up Lazarus from the dead, until His own spirit had just as thoroughly taken, as it were, the sense of death on His soul, as when, in the removal of any sickness, He habitually felt its burden (Matt. 8); not, of course, in a low, literal, physical manner, but weighing it all in His spirit with His Father. Of us it is said, "with groanings that cannot be uttered." If Christ groaned, His could not but be a groan in accordance with the Spirit — justly and perfectly uttering the real fulness of the grief that His heart felt. In our case this could not be, because there is that which mars the perfectness of what is felt by us; but in the case of Christ, the Holy Ghost takes up and groans out that which we cannot fully express. Even in us He gives the sorrow a divine expression to God; and, of course, in Christ there was no shortcoming, no mingling of the flesh, but all was absolutely perfect. Hence, along with this, there comes the full answer of God to the divine glory and perfection of Christ. Lazarus comes forth at the word of Christ.

This seems to me of deep interest; for we are too apt to look on Christ merely as One whose power dealt with

sickness and with the grave. But does it not weaken His power if the Lord Jesus Christ enters into the reality of the case before God? On the contrary, it better manifests the perfectness of His love, and the strength of His sympathy, to trace intelligently the way in which His spirit took up the reality of the ruin here below to bear and spread it before God. And I believe that this was true of everything in Christ. So it was before and when He came to the cross. Our Lord did not go there without feeling the past and present and future: the atoning work is not the same as the anguish of being cast off by His people, and the utter weakness of the disciples. Then the sense of what was coming was realized by His spirit before the actual fact. It is not true, but positively and wholly false doctrine, to confine our Lord Jesus to the matter of bearing our sin, though this was confessedly the deepest act of all. Of course, the atonement was only on the cross: the bearing of the wrath of God, when Christ was made sin, was exclusively then and there. But to find fault with the statement that Christ did in His own spirit realize beforehand what He was going to suffer on the cross, is to overlook much of His sufferings, to ignore truth, and despise Scripture — either leaving out a large portion of what God records about it, or confounding it with the actual fact, and only a part of it after all.

It is true that many Christians have been absorbed with the bare exertion of power in the miracles of Christ. In His healing of disease they have passed by the truth expressed in Isaiah 53:4, which Matthew applies to His life, and to which I have referred more than once. It seems undeniable, that not only was the power of God exhibited in those miracles, but that they afforded

opportunity for the depth of His feelings to display itself, who had before Him the creature as God made it, and the deplorable havoc sin had wrought. Thus Jesus did perfectly what saints do with a mixture of human infirmity. Take again the fact that the Lord is pleased at times to put us through some exercise of heart before the actual trial comes: what is the effect of this? Do we bear the trial less because the soul has already felt it with God? Surely not. On the contrary, this is just what proves the measure of our spirituality; and the more we go through the matter with God, the power and blessing are so much the greater; so that when the trial comes, it might appear to an outside observer as if all was perfect calmness, and so indeed it is, or should be; and this because all has been out between ourselves and God. This, I admit, increases the pain of the trial immensely; but is this a loss? especially as at the same time there is strength vouchsafed to bear it. Thus the principle applies even to our little trials.

But Christ endured and did everything in perfection. Hence, even before Lazarus was raised up at the grave, we do not see or hear of One coming with divine power and majesty, and doing the miracle, if I may so say, off-hand. What can be more opposed to the truth? He who has such a meagre notion of the scene has everything to learn about it. Not that there was the smallest lack of consciousness of His glory; He is the Son of God unmistakably; He knows that His Father hears Him always; but none of these things hindered the Lord from groans and tears at the grave which was about to witness His power. None of them hindered the Lord from taking on His spirit the sense of death as no one else did. This is described by the Holy Ghost in the most

emphatic language. “He groaned in spirit, and was troubled.” But what was all this, compared with what. was soon to befall Himself when God entered into judgment with Him for our sins? It is not only granted, but insisted, that the actual expiation of sin, under divine wrath, was entirely and exclusively on the cross; but thence to assume that He did not previously go through with God the coming scene, and what was leading on to it, and everything that could add to the anguish of our Lord, is defective and erroneous teaching, however freely it is allowed that there was in the scene itself the endurance of wrath for sin which separates that hour from all that ever was or can be again.

Then, before the end of the chapter, the effect of all this divine testimony is shown. Man decides that the Lord must die; their intolerance of Jesus becomes now more pronounced. It was well known before. The giddy multitude may never have realised it till it came; but the religious folk, and the leaders at Jerusalem, had made up their minds about it long before. He must die. And now he who was high priest takes up the word, and gives — though a wicked man, yet not without the Spirit acting — the authoritative sentence about it which is recorded in our chapter. The resurrection power of the Son of God brought to a head the enmity of him who had the power of death. Jesus might have done such works at Nain or elsewhere, but to display them publicly at Jerusalem was an affront to Satan and his earthly instruments. Now that the glory of the Lord Jesus shone out so brightly, threatening the dominion of the prince of this world, there was no longer a concealment of the resolution taken by the religious world — Jesus must die.

In John 12, accordingly, we have this, the under-current, still, but in a beautiful contrast. The Spirit of God here works in grace touching the death of Jesus, just as much as Satan was goading on his children to hatred and murder. God knows how to guide a beloved one of His where Jesus was abiding for a little season before He suffered. It was Mary; for John lets us hear the Lord Jesus calling His own sheep by name; and however rightly Matthew and Mark do not disclose it, it was not consistent with John's view of the Lord that she should be called merely "a woman," In his gospel such touches come out distinctly; and so we have Mary, and Mary's act with greater fulness as to its great principles, than anywhere else — the part Mary took at this supper, where Martha served, and Lazarus sat at the table. Everything, every one, is found in the just place and season; the true light makes all manifest as it was, Jesus Himself being there, but about to die. "Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus." She did anoint His head, and other gospels speak of this; but John mentions what was peculiar. It was natural to anoint the head; but the special thing for the eye of love to discern was the anointing of the feet. This was specially shown in two ways.

The woman in Luke 7 did the very same thing; but this was not Mary, nor is there any good reason to suppose that it was even Mary Magdalene, any more than the sister of Lazarus. It was "a woman that was a sinner;" and I believe there is much moral beauty in not giving us her name, for obvious reasons. What could it do but become an evil precedent, besides indulging a prurient curiosity about her? The name is here dropped; but what

of that, if it be written in heaven? There is a delicate veil cast over (not the grace shown by the Lord, but) the name of this woman who was a sinner; but there is an eternal record of the name and deed of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who at this much later moment anoints the feet of Christ. Yet, as far as this goes, both women did the same thing. The one, in the abasement of feeling her sin before His ineffable love, did what Mary did in the sense of His deep glory, and with an instinctive feeling withal of some impending evil that menaced Him. Thus the sense of her sin, and the sense of His glory, brought them, as it were, to the same point. Another point of analogy is, that neither woman spoke; the heart of each expressed itself in deeds intelligible, at least, to Him who was the object of this homage, and He understood and vindicated both.

In this case the house was filled with the odour of the ointment; but this manifestation of her love who thus anointed Jesus brought out the ill-feeling and covetousness of one soul who cared not for Jesus, but was, indeed, a thief under his high pretensions of care for the poor. It is a very solemn scene in this point of view, the line of treachery alongside of the offering of grace. How often the self-same circumstances, which draw out fidelity and devotedness, manifest either heartless treachery or self-seeking and worldliness 1 Such, in brief, was the interior of Bethany. Outside Jewish rancour was undisguised. The heart of the chief priests was set on blood. The Lord, in the next scene, enters Jerusalem as the Son of David. But I must pass on, merely noting this Messianic witness in its place. When Jesus was glorified, the disciples remembered these things. The subsequent notice we have is the

remarkable desire expressed by the Greeks, through Philip, to see Jesus. Here the Lord at once passes to another testimony, the Son of man, where the introduction of His most efficacious death is couched under the well-known figure of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, as the harbinger, and, indeed, the means, of much fruit. In the path of His death they must follow who would be with Him. Not that here again the destined Head of all, the Son of man, is insensible at the prospect of such a death, but cries to the Father, who answers the call to glorify His name by the declaration that He had (i.e., at the grave of Lazarus), and would again (i.e., by raising up Jesus Himself).

The Lord, in the centre of the chapter just after this, opens out once more the truth of the world's judgment, and of His cross as the attractive point for all men, as such, in contrast with Jewish expectation. There is, first, perfect submission to the Father's will, whatever it may cost; then, the perception of the results in all their extent. This is followed by their unbelief in His proper glory, as much as in His sufferings. Such must ever be for man, for the world, the insuperable difficulty. They had heard it in vain in the law; for this is always misused by man, as we have seen in the gospel of John. They could not reconcile it with the voice of grace and truth. Both had been fully manifested in Jesus, and above all, would be yet more in His death. The voice of the law spoke to their ears of a Christ continuing for ever; but a Son of man humbled, dying, lifted up! Who was this Son of man? How exactly the counterpart of an Israelite's objections to this day! The voice of grace and truth was that of Christ come to die in shame, yet a sacrifice for

sinners, however true also it was that in His own person He should continue for ever. Who could put these things together, seemingly so opposed? He who only heeds the law will never understand either the law or Christ.

Hence the chapter concludes with two closing warnings. Had they heard their own prophets? Let them listen also to Jesus. We have seen their ignorance of the law. In truth, the prophet Isaiah had shown long before that this was no new thing. He had predicted it in John 6, though a remnant should hear. The light of Jehovah might be ever so bright, but the heart of the people was gross. “Seeing they saw, but they did not understand.” There was no reception of the light of God. Even if they believed after a sort, there was no confession to salvation, for they loved the praise of men, Jesus — the Son of God, Jehovah Himself — stands on earth and cries — His final testimony. He pronounces upon it — claims once more to be the light. He was “come a light into the world.” This we have seen all through, from John 1 down to John 12. He was come a light into the world, that those that believed on Him should not abide in darkness. The effect was plain from the first; they preferred darkness to light. They loved sin; they had God manifested in love, manifested in Christ. The darkness was thus rendered only more visible in consequence of the light. “If any man hear my words, and believe not. I judge him not: 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 him in the last day.” Christ had not spoken from Himself, but as the sent One from the Father, who had charged Him what to say and what to speak. “And I know that his

commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

Time does not admit of more than a few words on the next two chapters (John 13, 14), which introduce a distinct section of our gospel, where (testimony having been fully rendered, not indeed with hope of man, but for the glory of God,) Christ quits association with man (though supper time was come, not "ended" — ver. 2) for a place suited to His glory, intrinsic and relational, as well as conferred; but alone with this (blessed to say), to give His own a part with Him in that heavenly glory (instead of His reigning over Israel here below).

Before concluding tonight, this I can notice but briefly, in order to bring my subject within the space allotted for it. Happily there is the less need to dwell on the chapters at the length they might claim, since many here are familiar with them, comparatively speaking. They are especially dear to the children of God in general.

First of all, our Lord has now terminated all question of testimony to man, whether to the Jew or to the world. He now addresses Himself to His own in the world, the unwavering, abiding objects of His love, as one just about to leave this world actually for that place which suits His essential nature, as well as the glory destined Him by the Father. Accordingly our Lord, as one about to go to heaven, new to Him as man, would prove His increasing love to them, (though fully knowing what the enemy would effect through the wickedness of one of their number, as well as through the infirmity of another,) and hence proceeds to give a visible sign then of what they would only understand later. It was the

service of love that He would continue for them, when Himself out of this world and themselves in it; a service as real as any that He had ever done for them while He was in this world, and if possible, more important than any they had yet experienced. But, then, this ministration of His grace was also connected with His own new portion in heaven. That is, it was to give them a part with Him outside the world. It was not divine goodness meeting them in the world, but as He was leaving the world for heaven, whence He came, He would associate them with Himself, and give them a share with Himself where He was going. He was about to pass, though Lord of all, into the presence of God His Father in heaven, but would manifest Himself the servant of them all, even to the washing of their feet soiled in walking here below. The point, therefore, was (not here exactly suffering for sins, but) the service of love for saints, to fit them for having communion with Him, before they have their portion with Him in that heavenly scene to which He was going at once. Such is the meaning suggested by the washing of the disciples' feet. In short, it is the word of God applied by the Holy Ghost to deal with all that unfits for fellowship with Christ in heaven, while He is there. It is the Holy Ghost's answer here to what Christ is doing there, as one identified with their cause above, the Holy Ghost meanwhile carrying on a like work in the disciples here, to keep them in, or restore them to, communion with Christ there. They are to be with Him alone; but, meanwhile, He is producing and keeping up, by the Spirit's use of the word, this practical fellowship with Himself on high. While the Lord, then, intimates to them that it had a mystical meaning, not apparent on the face of it, nothing could be more obvious than the love or the

humility of Christ. This, and more than this, had been abundantly shown by Him already, and in His every act. This, therefore, was not, and could not be, what was here meant, as that which Peter did not know then, but should know hereafter. Indeed, the lowly love of His Master was so apparent then, that the ardent but hasty disciple stumbled over it. There ought to be neither difficulty nor hesitation in allowing that a deeper sense lay hidden under that simple but suggestive action of Jesus — a sense which not even the chief of the twelve could then divine, but which not only he, but every one else, ought to seize now that it is made good in Christianity, or, more precisely, in Christ's dealing with the defilements of His own.

This should be borne in mind, that the washing meant is not with blood, but with water. It was for those who would be already washed from their sins in His blood, but who need none the less to be washed with water also. Indeed, it were well to look more narrowly into the words of our Lord Jesus. Besides the washing with blood, that with water is essential, and this doubly. The washing, of regeneration is not by blood, though inseparable from redemption by blood, and neither the one nor the other is ever repeated. But in addition to the washing of regeneration, there is a continual dealing of grace with the believer in this world; there is the constant need of the application of the word by the Holy Ghost discovering whatever there may be of inconsistency, and bringing him to judge himself in the detail of daily walk here below.

Note the contrast between legal requirement and our Lord's action in this case. Under the law the priests washed themselves, hands as well as feet. Here Christ

washes their feet. Need I say how highly the superiority of grace rises over the typical act of the law? Then follows, in connection and in contrast with it, the treachery of Judas. See how the Lord felt it from His familiar friend! How it troubled His spirit! It was a deep sorrow, a fresh instance of what has been referred to already.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, when the departure of Judas on his errand brought all before Him, the Saviour speaks again of death, and so glorifying God. It is not directly for the pardon or deliverance of disciples; yet who does not know that nowhere else is their blessing so secured? God was glorified in the Son of man where it was hardest, and even more than if sin had never been. Hence, as fruit of His glorifying God in His death, God would glorify Him in Himself "straightway." This is precisely what is taking place now. And this, it should be observed again, is in contrast with Judaism. The hope of the Jews is the manifestation of Christ's glory here below and by-and-by. What John shows is here in the immediate glorification of Christ on high. It does not depend upon any future time and circumstance, but was immediately consequent on the cross. But Christ was alone in this; none now could follow — no disciple, any more than a Jew, as Peter, bold but weak, would prove to his cost. The ark must go first into Jordan, but we may follow then, as Peter did triumphantly afterwards.

John 14 (and here, too, I must be brief) follows up the same spirit of contrast with all that belonged to Judaism; for if the ministration of love in cleansing the saints practically was very different from a glorious reign Over the earth, so was the hope here given them of Christ just as peculiar. The Lord intimates, first of all, that He was

not going to display Himself now as a Jewish Messiah, visible to the world; but as they believed in God, so they were to believe in Him. He was going to be unseen: quite a new thought to the Jewish mind as regards the Messiah, who, to them, always implied One manifested in power and glory in the world. “Ye believe in God,” He says, “believe also in me.” But then He connects the unseen condition He was about to assume with the character of the hope He was giving them. It was virtually saying that He was not going merely to bless them here. Nor would it be a scene for man to look on with his natural eyes in this world. He was going to bless them in an infinitely better way and place. “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.” This is what the Son tells. Very different is the burden of the prophets. This was a new thing reserved most fitly for Him. Who but He should be the first to unveil to disciples on earth the heavenly scene of love and holiness and joy and glory He knew so well? “If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” This is the turning-point and secret — “where I am.” All depends on this precious privilege. The place that was due to the Son was the place that grace would give to the sow. They were to be in the same blessedness with Christ. It was not merely, therefore, Christ about to depart and be in heaven, maintaining their communion with Himself there, but — wondrous grace! — in due time they, too, were to follow and be with Him; yea, if He went before them, so absolute was the grace, that He would not devolve it on any one else, so to speak to usher them there. He would come Himself, and thus would bring

them into His own place — “That where I am, there ye may be also.” This, I say, in all its parts, is the contrast of every hope, even of the brightest Jewish expectations.

Besides, He would assure them of the ground of their hope. In His own person they ought to have known how this could be. “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” They were surprised. Then, as ever, it was the overlooking of His glorious person that gave occasion to their bewilderment. In answer to Thomas, He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He was the way to the Father, and therefore they ought to have known. because no man comes to the Father but by Him. By receiving Jesus, by believing in Him, and only so, one comes to the Father, whom they had seen in Him, as Philip should have known. He was the way, and there was none other. Besides, He was the truth, the revelation of every one and everything as they are. He was also the life, in which that truth was, by the Spirit’s power, known and enjoyed. In every way Christ was the only possible means of their entering into this blessedness. He was in the Father, and the Father in Him; and as the words were not spoken from Himself, so the Father abiding in Him did the works. (Verses 1-11)

Then our Lord turns, from what they should even then have known in and from His person and words and works, to another thing which could not then be known. This divides the chapter. The first part is the Son known on earth in personal dignity as declaring the Father — imperfectly, no doubt, but still known. This ought to have been the means of their. apprehending whither He was going; for He was the Son not merely of Mary but of the Father. And this they then knew, however dull in perceiving the consequences. All His manifestation in

this gospel was just the witness of this glory, as they certainly ought to have seen; and the new hope was thoroughly in accordance with that glory. But now he discloses to them that which they could only do and understand when the Holy Ghost was given. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these 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. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” This supposes the Holy Ghost given. First, it is the Son present, and the Father known in Him, and He in the Father. Next, the Holy Ghost is promised. When He was given, these would be the blessed results. He was going away indeed; but they might better prove their love by keeping His commandments, than in human grief over His absence. Besides, Christ would ask the Father, who would give them their ever-abiding Comforter while He Himself was away. The Holy Ghost would be not a passing visitor on the earth, even as the Son who had been with them for a season. He would abide for ever. His dwelling with them is in contrast with any temporary blessing; and besides, He would be in

them — the expression of an intimacy which nothing human can fully illustrate.

Observe, the Lord uses the present tense both for Himself and for the Comforter — the Holy Spirit — in this chapter, in a way that will be explained shortly. In the early part of verse 2 He says about Himself, “I go to Prepare a place for you.” He does not mean that He was in the act of departure, but just about to go. He uses the present to express its certainty and nearness; He then was on the point of going. So even of coming back again, where likewise He uses the present, “I come again.” He does not precisely say, as in the English version, “I will come.” This passage of Scripture suffices to exemplify a common idiomatic usage in Greek, as in our own and other tongues, when a thing is to be regarded as sure, and to be constantly expected. It seems to me an analogous usage in connection with the Holy Ghost — “He dwelleth with you.” I apprehend that the object is simply to lay the stress on the dwelling. The Holy Ghost, when He comes, will not come and go soon after, but abide. Hence, says the Lord, Jesus, “He abideth with you” — the same word so often used for abiding throughout the chapter; and next, as we saw, “He shall be in you:” a needful word to add; for otherwise it was not implied in His abiding with them.

These, then, are the two great truths of the chapter: their future portion with Christ in the Father’s house; and, meanwhile, the permanent stay of the Holy Ghost with the disciples, and this, too, as indwelling on the footing of life in Christ risen. (Ver. 19) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I

am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Thus, having the Holy Ghost as the power of life in Him, they would know Him nearer to them, and themselves to Him, when they should know Him in the Father, than if they had Him as Messiah with them and over them in the earth. These are the two truths which the Lord thus communicates to them.

Then we have a contrast of manifestation to the disciples, and to the world, connected with another very important point — the Holy Ghost's power shown in their obedience, and drawing down a love according to the Father's government of His children. It is not merely the Father's love for His children as such, but Father and Son loving them, because of having and keeping the commandments of Jesus. This would be met by a manifestation of Jesus to the soul, such as the world knows nothing of. But the Lord explains further, that if a man loves Him, he will keep His word, and His Father will love him, "and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (v. 23) This is not a commandment, but His word — a simple intimation of His mind or will; and, therefore, as a more thorough test, so followed by a fuller blessing. This is a beautiful difference, and of great practical value, being bound up with the measure of our attentiveness of heart. Where obedience lies comparatively on the surface, and self-will or worldliness is not judged, a commandment is always necessary to enforce it. People therefore ask, "Must I do this? Is there any harm in that?" To such the Lord's will is solely a question of command. Now there are commandments, the expression of His authority; and they are not grievous. But, besides, where the heart loves Him deeply, His word10 will give enough

expression of His will to him that loves Christ. Even in nature a parent's look will do it. As we well know, an obedient child catches her mother's desire. before the mother has uttered a word. So, whatever might be the word of Jesus, it would be heeded, and thus the heart and life be formed in obedience. And what is not the joy and power where such willing subjection to Christ pervades the soul, and all is in the communion of the Father and the Son? How little can any of us speak of it as our habitual unbroken portion!

The concluding verses (25-31) bring before them the reason of the Lord's communication, and the confidence they may repose in the Spirit, both in His own teaching them all things, and in His recalling all things which Jesus said to them. "Peace," He adds, "I leave [fruit of His very death; nor this only, but His own character of peace, what He Himself knew] with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." "Not as the world," which is capricious and partial, keeping for itself even where it affects most generosity. He alone who was God could give as Jesus gave, at all cost, and what was most precious. And see what confidence He looks for, what affections superior to self! "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." Little remained for Him to talk with them. Another task was before Him — not with saints, but with Satan, who coming would find nothing in Him, save, indeed, obedience up to death itself, that the world might know that He loves the Father, and does just as He commands. And then He bids the disciples rise up, and go hence, as in John 13. He rose up Himself (both being, in my

opinion, significant actions, in accordance with what was opening out before Him and them).

But I need and must say no more now on this precious portion. I could only hope to convey the general scope of the contents, as well as their distinctive character. May our God and Father grant that what has been said may help His children to read His word with ever deepening intelligence and enjoyment of it, and of Him with whose grace and glory it is filled!

John 15 - 21.

In John 15 our Lord substitutes Himself for Israel, as the plant of God, responsible to bear fruit for Him on earth (not merely for man, as such, openly sinful and lost). He takes the place of that which most put itself forward as being according to God here below. As our Lord Himself said (in John 4), “Salvation is of the Jews:” this place of privilege and promise made their actual condition so much the guiltier. Our Lord, therefore, sets aside openly, and for ever, as regards those that He was now calling out of the world, all connection with Israel. “I am the true vine,” He says. We all know that Israel of old is called the vine — the vine that the Lord had brought out of Egypt. But Israel was empty, fruitless, false: Christ was the only true vine. Whatever might be the responsibility of Israel, whatever their boasted privileges (and they really were much every way), whatever the associations and hopes of the chosen people, all outside Christ had fallen under the power of the adversary. The only blessing for a soul now was found in Christ Himself; and so He opens the discourse (or, as we saw, closes what went before) with — “Rise up: let us go hence.” There was an abandonment, not

only for Himself, but for them, of all connection with nature, or the world, even in their religion. It was Christ now, or nothing. As in the beginning of John 13, He had risen up anticipatively as a sign of His work for them on high; so here He calls them to quit all their earthly belongings with Himself; they were now definitively done with. Thus we have the Lord taking now the place substitutionally of all that had exercised religious power over their spirits. It was now proved to be neither a blessing nor even safety for a soul on earth.

"I," He says, "am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." He puts Himself in the place of all to which they had been attached and belonged here below, and the Father in lieu of Almighty God, or the Jehovah of Israel. So had He been known. to the fathers and the children of Israel; but it was His Father, as such, to whose care He commends them now. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit;" for fruit was what God looked for, not merely acts or obligations, but bearing fruit: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." This is the general statement. There is a two-fold dealing with those who took the place of being branches of the true vine. Where no fruit was borne, there was judgment in excision; where fruit appeared, purging followed, that there might be more.

The Lord applies this truth particularly: "Already ye are clean through the word that I have spoken to you. Exhortation follows in verses 4, 5; the results distinctively for "a man," for any one (τις) who does not abide, and for the disciples who do, are found respectively in verse 6, and in verses 7, 8.

In this chapter it is never simply a question of divine grace saving sinners, blotting out iniquities, remembering sins and transgressions no more; but the power of the word is morally applied to judge whatever is contrary to God's character displayed in Christ, or, rather, to the Father's will revealed in Him. No standard less than this could be entertained, now that Christ was revealed. They then (for Judas was gone) were already clean through the word Christ had spoken to them. The law of Moses, divine as it was, would not suffice: it was negative; but Christ's word is positive. "Abide in me, 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." It is not what God is in grace towards those that are outside Him and lost, but the appraisal of the ways of those associated with Christ, the dealings of God, or more strictly of His Father, with those who professed to belong to the Lord. I say "professed," because it is to me evident that He does not contemplate in His view those exclusively who really had life everlasting. Still less do branches of the vine mean the same thing as members of Christ's body, but His followers, who might even abandon Him, as some in the earliest days walked no more with Him. This alone explains our chapter, without forcing it.

The Lord, then, has in view those who then surrounded Him, already branches in the vine, and, of course, in principle, all that should follow, including those that would nominally, and at first to all appearance really, abandon Israel and all things for Him. It was no light matter, but one of much seriousness; and surely, therefore, if a man did thus come out from all that claimed his affections and conscience, from his religion;

in short, if a man came out at the cost of every thing, finding most of all foes in those of his own household, there was that which presumed sincerity of conduct, but had still to be proved. The proof would be abiding in Christ. There is no word more characteristic of John than the very word “abiding,” and this in the way both of grace and of government. Here it is the disciples put to the proof. For Christianity is the revelation, not of a dogma, but of a person who has wrought redemption; doubtless, also, of a person in whom is life, and who gives it. Thence flows a new sort of responsibility; and a very important thing it is to see this most strikingly kept up in him, who, of all the evangelists, most strongly brings in the absolute unconditional love of God. Take the early part of the gospel, where the gift of Jesus in divine love, the sending Him into the world not to judge, but to save, makes known what God is to a lost world. There we have grace without a single thought of any thing on man’s part, save the depth of need. “For God,” He says, “so loved the world, 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.” (John 3:16, 17) But here the ground is different. We see those who had come out to Christ from all that they had previously valued in the earth. Alas! flesh is capable of imitating faith; it can go a long way in religiousness, and in renunciation of the profane world. Soon there would be multitudes who would come out from Israel and be baptized unto Christ; but still they must be fully tested. None would stand by baptism, or by any other ordinance, but by abiding in Christ.

“Abide in me, and I in you.” Here He always puts man’s part first, because it is a question, as we have seen, of responsibility; where it is the grace of God, His part is first necessarily, and, further, it necessarily abides. Whereas, if man’s responsibility is before us, it is evident that there can be no necessary permanence here: all turns on dependence on Him who always abides the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Thus the reality of God’s work in the soul proves itself, so to speak, by continual looking and clinging to Christ. In verse 4 it is not, “Except I abide in you,” but, “Except ye abide in me.”

“I am the vine, and 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.” (Verse 5) It is not here believing, but “doing,” though faith be the spring, of course. The Lord would have us bear much fruit, and the only way in which fruit is to be borne is by abiding in Him in whom we believe. What can be a weightier consideration for us, after receiving Christ! Do you go after some other thing or person in order to bear fruit? The result in God’s sight is bad fruit.

Thus Christ is not only everlasting life to the soul that believes in Him, but He is the only source of fruit-bearing, all the course through, for those that have received Him. The secret is the heart occupied with Him, the soul dependent on Him, Himself the object in all trials, difficulties, and duties even; so that, though a given thing be a duty, it be not done now barely as such, but with Christ before the eye of faith. But where there is not a life exercised in self-judgment and in enjoyment of Christ. as well as prayer, men get tired of this; they turn away from Him to the nostrums of the day, whether

novel or antique, moral or intellectual. They find their attraction in religious feelings, experiences, frames, or visions; in imagining some new good self, or in anatomizing the old bad self; in sacerdotalism, ordinances, or legalism, of one sort or another. Thus they really return, in some shape or degree, to the false vine, instead of cleaving to the true. They lose themselves thus. It may even be a slip back into the world, into the open enemy of the Father; for this is no uncommon result, where there is for a time an abandonment of the old fleshly vine, the religion of ordinances, of human effort, and of assumed privilege. All this was found in its fulness and apparent perfection in Israel; but it was now discovering its utter hopeless hollowness and antagonism to the mind of God; and this was manifested, as we shall find later on in this chapter, in their causeless hatred of the Father and the Son. Christ is ever the test, and this the close declares, as much as the beginning sets Him forth as the only power of preparing for, and producing fruit.

This appears again in the sixth verse, and remarkably too: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch.” Apply such language to life everlasting, or, still more, to union with Christ, and there is nothing but endless confusion. Where Scripture speaks of union with Christ, or, again, of life in Him, you never have such a thought as a member of Christ cut off, or one that had eternal life losing it. It is very possible that some who have accurate knowledge might give it, or plunge into all; and this is what Peter speaks of in his second epistle. There is no preservative energy in knowledge ever so full. Such might allow stumbling-blocks, disappointments, etc., to hinder their following Christ,

and so practically abandon what they know, the result of which would be the surest and most disastrous ruin. They are worse even than before. So Jude speaks of men twice dead; and, in fact, experience proves that men who have no life in Christ, after having professed awhile, become fiercer adversaries, if not grosser sinners, against the Lord than before any such profession was made.

This is the case our Lord describes here: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” It was one who had come out from the world, and had followed Christ. But there was no attraction of heart, no power of faith, and consequently no dependence on Christ; and this is the Lord’s sentence pronounced on all such, whether in that day or in any other.

On the other hand, He says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Not only is the heart occupied with Christ, but also His words weigh there. The Old Testament alone would not suffice. It had been used of God when there was nothing more. Blessed of God at all times it would surely be; and he that valued Christ’s words would never slight those that witnessed of Christ before He came. But the soul that would make light of the words of Christ, or do without them, after they were communicated, would evince its own faithlessness. The Christian that really prizes the word of God in the Old Testament would still more set his heart on that in the New. He that had no more than a naturally reverent attachment to the law and the prophets, without faith, would prove his real condition by inattention to Christ’s

words. Thus, to this day, the Jews are themselves the great witness of the truth of our Lord's warning. They are clinging to the empty vine; and so all their religious profession is as empty before God. They may seem to cleave to the words of Moses, but it is mere human tenacity, not divine faith: else the words of Christ would be welcome above all. As the Lord had told them at an earlier moment, had they believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. for Moses wrote of Christ: in truth, there was no divine persuasion as to either. Again, the great test now is Christ's words abiding in us. Old truth, even though equally of God as the new, ceases to be a test when new truth is given and refused, or slighted; and the same thing is true not merely of God's word as a whole, but of a particular truth, when God reawakens it at any given time for the actual exigency of the Church or of His work. It is vain, for instance, to fall back now on the principles put forward and acted on two or three hundred years ago. Of course it is right and of God to hold fast all He gave at any time; but if there be real faith, it will be found out ere long that the Holy Ghost has before Him the present need for the Lord's glory in the Church; and those that have real confidence in His power will not merely hold fast the old but accept the new, in order so much the more to walk in communion with Him who ever watches and works for the name of Christ and the blessing of His saints.

In this case, however, it is the larger subject — the all-importance of Christ's words abiding in us: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." There is first the person, then the expression of His mind. Prayer follows: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." It is not prayer first (for this should not take the

place either of Christ or of intelligence in His mind), but Christ Himself, the prime object; then His words, as forming fully the heart, according to His thoughts and will; and, lastly, the going out of the heart to the Father, on the ground both of Christ and of His revealed mind, with the annexed assurance that so it should come to pass for them. (Verse 7)

The prayer of Christians is often far from this. How many prayers are there where nothing seems to be done! This way be true, not merely of poor failing souls, such as any of us here; but even an apostle might find the same thing in his course, and God Himself be the witness of it. Indeed, the apostle Paul is the chronicler of the fact to us, that his prayers were not always in this communion. We know he besought the Lord thrice to take away that which was an immense trial to him, making him despicable in the eyes of the less spiritual. We can understand this: nothing is more natural; but, for that very reason, it was not all in the power of the Spirit of God, with Christ as the first object. He was thinking of himself, of his brethren, and of the work; but God graciously brought him to Christ, as the One sustained and sustaining object — to abide in Him, as it is said here, and to have Christ's words abiding in himself, and then all the resources of God were at his command. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (Compare also Phil. 4:6-13) It is only so that there is the certainty of the answer, at least, of what we ask being done.

The object is to show how God the Father answers and acts in accordance with those who are thus practically associated in heart with Christ. And so it is written, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become my disciples.” (Verse 8) “Disciples,” be it noted; for we must carefully bear in mind that we have not the Church as such here, and, indeed, we have never the Church, strictly speaking, in John. The reason is manifest, because the object of this gospel is not to point out Christ in heaven, but God manifesting Himself in Christ on the earth. I do not mean that we have no allusion to His ascent or presence there; for we have seen that there is here some such allusion, especially when the Holy Ghost replaces Him here, and we shall have it repeatedly in what follows. At the same time, the main testimony of John is not so much Christ as man in heaven, but God in Him manifest on the earth. It is evident that, He being the Son, the special place of privilege found in the gospel of John is that of children — not members of Christ’s body, but sons of God, as receiving and associated with the Son, the only-begotten Son of the Father.

Here He speaks of them as disciples; for, in point of fact, the relationship of which John 15 speaks was already true. They had already come to Christ; they had forsaken all to follow Him, and were then around Him. He was the Vine now and here. It was not a new place He was going to enter. They, too, were branches then, and more than that, they were clean through the word He had spoken to them. Not that they were then cleansed by blood, but, at least, they were born of water and of the Spirit. They had this cleansing, this moral operation, of the Spirit wrought in their souls. They

were bathed or washed all over, and henceforth needed not save to wash their feet.

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue [abide] ye in my love.” (Ver. 9) It is all a question of the Father’s government and the disciples’ responsibility; not of a people having to do with a governor nationally, as Jehovah was to Israel, but of Christ’s disciples in relation with the Father, according to the revelation of Himself in Christ. Nor is it here His grace delivering souls, but, what is true along with that, the full maintenance of individual responsibility, according to the manifestation of His nature and relationship in Christ here below. Thus, as compared with the past, the standard is raised immensely. For when once God had brought out Christ, He neither could nor would go back to anything less. It is not merely that He could not own anything short of Christ as a means of salvation, because this is always true; and never was any one brought to God at any time since the world began save by Christ, however scanty the testimony or partial the knowledge of Him. Under the law there was, comparatively speaking, little or no acquaintance with His work as a distinct thing, nor could there be, perhaps (at any rate there was not), even after He came, till the work was done. But here we have God’s ways and character as manifested in Christ, and nothing less than this would suit His disciples, or be agreeable to the Father. As already remarked, the application of this to life everlasting only induces contradiction. Thus, if we suppose that the subject of the chapter is, e.g., life or union with Christ, just see into what difficulties this false start plunges one at once: all would be made conditional, and those united to Christ might be lost. “If

ye keep my commandments" — what has that to do with life eternal in Christ? Does union with Christ, does life eternal, depend on keeping His commandments? Clearly not; yet there is a meaning, and a most weighty meaning for those that belong to Christ, in these words. Apply them, not to grace but to government, and all is plain and sure and consistent.

The meaning is, that it is impossible to produce fruit for the Father, — impossible to keep up the enjoyment of Christ's love, unless there be obedience, and this to Christ's commandments. I repeat, that he who values the Master will not despise the servant; but there are many who do acknowledge their responsibility to the law of Moses without appreciating and obeying the words of Christ. He that loves Christ will enjoy all truth, because Christ is the truth. He will cherish every expression of God's mind; he will find guidance in the law, the prophets, the psalms — everywhere; and so much the more where there is the fullest revelation of Christ Himself. Christ is the true light. Therefore, as long as Christ is not the One in and through whose light the Scriptures, whether old or new, are read, a man is but groping his way in the dark. When he sees and believes in the Son, there is for him a sure way through the wilderness, and also a bright way in the word of God. The darkness passes away; bondage is no more; there is no condemnation, but, on the contrary, life, light, and liberty; but, at the same time, it is a liberty used in the sense of responsibility to please our God and Father, measured by the revelation of Himself in Christ.

So the Lord says, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." The

consequence is, that where there is carelessness in one who belongs to Christ, in a living, branch of the vine, the Father as the husbandman deals in purging judgment. Where habitual obedience is found, there is habitual enjoyment of Christ's love. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Supposing that for a time there is a departure from Christ, what is the effect of it? No matter how really a man may be a child of God, he is miserable; the more real, the more miserable. One that had not a conscience exercised before God might sleep over sin and accustom himself to evil for a while; and an unreal disciple would grow. tired of carrying on the profession of Christ along with indulged evil; nor would God allow it to go beyond a certain point as an ordinary rule. But for a saint, true-hearted in the main, nothing is more certain than that Christ would deal with him, and that he would lose meanwhile all sense of the love of Christ as a present practical thing. It is a matter of communion, not of salvation. And surely it ought to be so, and we would not desire it to be otherwise. Who would desire an unreal thing — the keeping up an appearance, the parade of words and sentiments beyond the heart's state? There is nothing more calamitous for a soul than to be going on badly, and withal keeping up a vain, exaggerated semblance of feeling, where there is a scanty answer to it within.

With the enjoyment of Christ's love, then, goes obedience; and where the disciple fails in obedience, there cannot be a real abiding in His love. Here it is not a question of love everlasting, but of present communion. He only abides in Christ's love who walks in

His will faithfully. We must discriminate in the love of Christ. Unconditionally, of pure grace, He loved them that were His. Again, there was love, in a broad sense even for those that were not His, as we have seen more than once. Besides, there is the special personal love of approbation for him who is walking in the ways of God.

Some there are a little sensitive on these subjects. They do not like to hear, save of eternal love of the elect; and certainly, if this were weakened or denied, they might have reason to resent it. But as it is there cannot be a more painful proof of their own state. The reason why they cannot bear this farther truth is because it condemns them. If these things are in Scripture, (and deny them who dares?) our business is to submit; our duty is to seek to understand them; our wisdom is to correct and challenge ourselves, if peradventure we find insubjection within us to anything that concerns Him and our own souls. Not to speak of Christ, even on the lowest ground, we are depriving ourselves of what is good and profitable. What, indeed, can be more ruinous than putting aside that which condemns any state in which we find ourselves?

I need not enter into all the details of our chapter, though I have rather minutely gone over it thus far, believing it to be of special importance, because it is so much and generally misunderstood. Here the Lord presents Himself as the only source, not of life, as elsewhere, but of fruit-bearing for disciples, or His professed followers. What He shows is, that they need Him just as much for every day as for eternity; that they need Him for the fruit the Father expects from them now, just as much as for a title to heaven. Hence He speaks of that which pertains to a disciple on the earth;

and accordingly the Lord speaks of having Himself kept His Father's commandments, and of His own abiding in His love; for, indeed, He had ever been here below the dependent man, to whom the Father was the moral source of the life He lived; and so He would have us now to live because of Himself.

I entreat any who have misread this chapter to examine thoroughly what I am now urging on my hearers. It is incalculable the quantity of scripture that is passed over without distinct exercise of faith. Souls receive it in a general way; and too often one reason why it is received so easily is, because they do not face the truth, and their conscience is not exercised by it. If they thought, weighed, and let into their souls the real truth conveyed, they might at first be startled, but the way and the end would be blessed to them. What a return for these wondrous communications of Christ, just to slip over them perfunctorily, without making the light our own! Our Lord then clearly shows that He, as man here below, had Himself walked under the government of His Father. It was not merely that He was born of a woman, born under the law, but, as He says here, "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments." It went much farther than the ten words, or all the rest of the law; it embraced every expression of the Father's authority, from whatever quarter it came. And as He could not but perfectly keep His Father's commandments, He abode in His love. As the eternal Son of the Father, of course He was ever loved of the Father; as laying down His life (John 10), He was therefore loved of His Father; but, besides, in all His earthly path, He kept His Father's commandments, and abode in His love. The Father, looking upon the Son as man walking here below, never

found the slightest deflection; but, on the contrary, the perfect image of His own will in Him who, being the Son, made known and glorified the Father as He never was nor could be by any other. This was not simply as God, but rather as the Man Christ Jesus here below. I admit that, being such an One, there could be no failure. To suppose I will not say the fact, but the possibility even, of a flaw in Christ, either as God or as man, proves that he who admits the thought has no faith in His person. There could be none. Still, the trial was made under the most adverse circumstances; and He who, though God Himself, was at the same time man, walked as man perfectly, as truly as He was perfect man; and thus the Father's love rested governmentally upon Him fully, unwaveringly, absolutely in all His ways.

Now we, too, are placed upon the true ground as the disciples, strictly speaking, who were then there; but, of course, the same principle applies to all.

Another thing comes in after this. Gathered round Christ, the disciples were called on by Christ to love one another. (Ver. 12) Loving one's neighbour was not the point now; nor is it so here. Of course, loving one's neighbour abides always, but this, no matter how accomplished, ought not to be enough for a disciple of Christ. Such a demand was right and seasonable for a man in the flesh — for a Jew especially; but it could not suffice for the heart of a Christian, and, in fact, he who denies this, quarrels with the Lord's own words. A Christian, I repeat, is not absolved from loving his neighbour — nobody means that, I trust; but what I affirm is, that a Christian is called to love his fellow Christian in a new and special manner, exemplified and formed by the love of Christ; and I cannot but think that

he who confounds this with love to his neighbour has a great deal to learn about Christ, and Christianity too.

The Lord evidently introduces it as a new thing. “This is my commandment.” It was His commandment specially. He it was that first gathered the disciples. They were a distinct company from Israel, though not yet baptized into one body; but they were gathered by Christ, and round Himself, severed from the rest of the Jews so far. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another.” But according to what measure? “As I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Shall I be told that any man ever loved, before Christ came into the world, as He loved? If a man will be ignorant, let him be ignorant, and show his unbelief by such an assertion, if he will. Now I say that there is a love looked for, such as could only be since Christ manifested it, and that His love fills and fashions after its own nature and direction. The disciples were now to love one another according to the pattern of Him who laid down His life for them as His friends. Indeed, He died for them when they were enemies; but this is out of sight here. They were His friends, if they did whatever He commanded them. (Ver. 14) He called them friends, not slaves; for the slave knows not what his master does; but He called them friends, for He made them His confidants in all He had heard of His Father. They had not chosen Him, but He them, and set them to go and bear fruit, abiding fruit, that He might give them whatsoever they asked the Father in His name. ‘These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (Verses 15-17)

And truly they would need the love of one another, as Christ loved them. They had become objects of the

hatred of the world. (Verses 18, 19) The Jews knew no such experience. They might be disliked of the Gentiles. They were a peculiar people, no doubt, and the nations could ill brook a small nation raised to such a conspicuous place, whose law condemned them and their gods. But the disciples were to have the hatred of the world, of the Jew as much or more than of the Gentile. They had this indeed already, and they must make up their minds to it from the world. The love of Christ was on them, and, working in them and by them, would make them the objects of the world's hatred, and after that sort which He had Himself known. As He says here: "If the world hate you, 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, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." I refer to this for the purpose of showing, that the revelation of Christ has brought in not merely a total change in the consciousness of eternal life and salvation when the work was done, as well as the overthrow of all distinctions between Jew and Gentile, which we find, of course, in the epistles — but, besides that practically, has 'brought in a power of producing fruit that could not be before, a mutual love peculiar to Christians, and a rejection and hatred from the world beyond all that had been. In every way possible Christ gives us now His own portion, from the world as well as from the Father. "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." (Verse 20)

Fully do I admit that there were works of faith, deeds of righteousness, holy, wise, obedient ways, in saints of God from the beginning. You could not have faith without a new nature, nor this again without the exercise practically of that which was according to God's will. Therefore, as all saints from the beginning had faith, and were regenerate, so also there were spiritual ways in accordance with it.

But God's revelation in Christ makes an immense accession of blessing; and the consequence is, that this brings out the mind of God in a way that was not and could not have been before, just because there was no manifestation of Christ, and nobody but Christ could bring it adequately out. With this revelation the hatred of the world is commensurate; and the Lord puts it in the strongest possible way. "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." (Ver. 21, 22) What can be plainer than the enormous change that was coming in now? We know that there had been sin all along, in the dealings of God with His ancient people; but what does the Lord here mean? Are we to fritter away the meaning of His language? Are we not to believe that, whatever there was before, the revelation of Christ brought sin to such a head, that what had been before was, comparatively speaking, a little thing when put beside the evil that was done against, and measured by, the glory of Christ the Son, the rejection of the Father's love; in short, the hatred shown to grace and truth — yea, the Father and the Son fully revealed in the Lord Jesus? Clearly so. It is not, then, a question of judging sin by right and wrong, by law, or by conscience — all

well and in place for Israel and man as such. But when One who is more than man comes into the world, the dignity of the person sinned against, the love and light revealed in His person, all bear on the estimate of sin; and the consequence is, there could be no such character of sin till Christ was manifested, though, of course, heart and nature are the same.

But the revelation of Christ forced everything to a point, sounded the condition of man as nothing else could, and proved that, bad as Israel might be, when measured by a law — a holy, just, good law of God, yet, measured now by the Son of God, all sin previously was as nothing compared with the still deeper sin of rejecting the Son of God. “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” (Ver. 23) It is not merely God as such, but “my Father” that was hated. “If I had not done among them” — not now His words only, but works — “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.” (Verse 24) There was a full testimony, as we have seen already, in John 8, 9. (His words in John 8, His works in John 9); but the manifestation of His words and of His works only brought out man thoroughly hating the Father and the Son. Had they only failed to meet the requirements of God, as man had done under the law, there was ample provision to meet him in mercy and power; but now, under this revelation of grace, man, and Israel most of all, the world (for in this they are all merged now) stood out in open hostility to, and implacable hatred of, the fullest display of divine goodness here below. But this dreadful hopeless hatred, evil as it was, ought not to surprise one who believes the word of God; it was, “that the word might be fulfilled

which was written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” (Verse 25) There is nothing that so demonstrates man’s total alienation and enmity. This is precisely what Christ here urges. The disciples accordingly, having received this grace in Christ, were called into a like path with Him, the epistle here below of Christ who is above. Fruit-bearing is the great point throughout John 15, as the end of it and John 16 bring before us testimony. “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, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” Here is a twofold testimony — that of the disciples who had seen Christ and heard His words. Hence they were called to bear witness of Him — “because ye have been with me from the beginning.” It was not only the great manifestation at the end, but the truth from the beginning, grace and truth always in Him. Dealing differently, no doubt, according to that which was before Him; still it was in Christ ever the value of what came, not what He found, which was the great point. And to this testimony (for He is showing now the full testimony which the disciples were called to render) the Holy Ghost would add His, (wondrous to say and know it true!) as distinct from the witness of the disciples. We know right well that a disciple only renders testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost. How, then, do we find the Holy Ghost’s testimony spoken of as distinct from theirs? Both are true, especially when we bear in mind that He would testify of the heavenly side of truth. In John 14:26, it was said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” There

the Holy Ghost is both a teacher and helper. As it is said, “He will teach you all things” — what they never knew, besides bringing to remembrance things that they had known.

In the end of John 15 there is a good deal more. The Holy Ghost, “when he is come,” (not “whom the Father will send,” but) “whom I will send from the Father.” (Ver. 26) The Holy Ghost was both sent by the Father, and sent by the Son; not the same thing, but quite consistent. There is a distinct line of truth in the two cases. You could not transplant from John 15 into John 14, nor the reverse, without dislocating the whole order of the truth. Surely it all deserves to be weighed, and demands from us that we should wait upon God to learn His precious things. In John 14 it is evidently the Father giving another Comforter to the disciples, and sending Him in Christ’s name: Christ is looked at there as One who prays, and whose value acts for the disciples. But in John 15 it is One who is Himself everything for the disciples from on high. Here He was the one spring of whatever fruit was borne, and He is gone on high, but is the same there; and so not merely asks the Father to send, but Himself sends them from the Father the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from with the Father, if so literal a turn may be allowed. His own personal glory on high is in full view, and so He speaks and acts, while the connection with the Father is always kept up. Still, in the one case it is the Father who sends; in the other, the Son; and this last, where the point is to show the new glory of Christ above. “He shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” There would be the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent from the Son, and bearing witness of

Him according to the place whence He came to replace Him here. The Holy Ghost, sent thus from above, would bear witness of the Son in heaven; but the disciples also would bear witness of what they knew when He was upon the earth, because they had been with Him from the beginning (i.e. of His manifestation here). Both we have in Christianity, which not only maintains the testimony of Christ, as manifested on the earth, but also the Holy Ghost's witness of Christ known on high. To leave out either is to strip Christianity of half its value. There is that which never can make up for Christ on the earth; and certainly there is that revealed of Christ in heaven which no manifestation on the earth can supply. They have, both of them, a divine place and power for the children of God.

John 16 seems to be based rather on this last. The main difference is, that the Holy Ghost is more spoken of here apart from the question of who sends. It is more the Holy Ghost coming than sent here; that is, the Holy Ghost is looked at — not certainly as acting independently, but yet as a distinct person. He comes, not to display His own power and glory, but expressly to glorify Christ. At the same time, He is looked at in more distinct personality than in John 14, 15. And our Lord had the wisest reason for making known to the disciples what they had to expect. They were now entering on the path of testimony, that always involves suffering We have seen what should befall them in bearing fruit as Christ's disciples and friends. This is enough for the world, which hates them as Him, because they are not of it, but are loved and chosen of Christ. These two things unite the disciples. The hatred of the world and the love of Christ press them so much the more together. But

there is also the hatred which befalls them in testifying, not as disciples so much as witnesses. Witnessing as the disciples did of what they had known of Christ here, witnessing of what the Spirit taught them of Christ on high, the consequence would be, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” It is clearly religious rancour created by this full testimony, not the world’s general ill-feeling, but special hatred to their testimony. Hence, it would be putting them, not merely into prisons, but out of the synagogues; and this under the notion of doing God service. It is religious persecution. “And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. How perfectly the truth shines here on Christian as well as on Jewish hatred of all full testimony to Christ! Spite of the liberalism of the day, this peeps out where it dares. They talk about God; they speculate about the Deity, providence, fate, or chance. They may even be zealous for the law, and tack on Christ to it. There a great deal of the world’s religion ends. But they know not the Father nor the Son. It is irreverence to draw near and cry, Abba, Father! It is presumption for a man in this life to count himself a child of God! The consequence is, that wherever there is this ignorance of the Father and the Son, there is inveterate hostility against such as are joyful in the communion of the Father and the Son. This hatred every true witness, without compromise, and separate from the world, must more or less experience. The Lord would not have them surprised. Jewish brethren might have thought that, having received Christ, everything was to be smooth, bright, and peaceful. Not so. They must expect special and

increasing, and, worst of all, religious hatred. (Verses 1-4)

“But now I go my way to him that sent me.” The path lay through death, no doubt; but He puts it as going to Him that sent Him. Let them be comforted, then, as surely they would if they rightly thought of His Father’s presence. But “none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?” (Ver. 5) They felt natural sadness at the thought of His departure. Had they gone a step farther, and asked whither He was going, it would have been all right, they would have felt glad for Him; for though it were their loss, it was most surely His gain and joy — the joy that was set before Him, the joy of being with His Father, with the comfort for His own of an accomplished redemption (attested by His thus going on high). “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: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” (Ver. 7) It is the Comforter coming. No doubt Christ sends; and there lies the connection with the end of John 15. Still there is the special form of presenting Him as one that comes, which is confirmed in the next verse. “And when he is come, he will reprove [or convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (Ver. 8) This is a sentence much to be pondered. It is now God’s Spirit dealing according to the gospel with individual souls, which is perfectly true and most important. Conviction of sin is wrought in all who are born of God. What confidence could there be in a soul professing to have found redemption, even forgiveness of sins, through His blood, unless there were an accompanying sense of sin? The Spirit of God does produce this. Souls must be

simple and distinct in it as truly as in believing in Christ Jesus. There is a real individual work in those, yea, in all brought to God. For a sinner, repentance remains an eternal necessity.

Here, however, the Holy Ghost is not spoken of as dealing with individuals when He regenerates them and they believe, but as bringing conviction to the world of sin because of unbelief There is no real conviction of sin unless there be faith. It may be but the first working of God's grace in the soul that produces it. There may not be faith so as to have peace with God, but assuredly enough to judge of one's own ways and condition before God; and this is precisely the way in which He does ordinarily work. At the same time there is also the conviction of which the Lord speaks: the Holy Ghost, when He is come, will convince the world of sin. Why? Because they have broken the law? Not so. This may be used, but is not the ground nor the standard when Christ is the question. The law remains, and the Spirit of God often employs it, specially if a man be in self-righteousness. But the fact is clear, that the Holy Ghost is sent down; as it is also clear, that the Holy Ghost, being here, convicts the world — i.e., what is outside where He is. Were there faith, the Holy Ghost would be in their midst; but the world does not believe. Hence Christ is, as everywhere in John, the standard for judging the condition of men. "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, [not when they begin to believe in me, but] because they believe not in me." Again, the conviction of righteousness is equally remarkable. There is no reference even to the blessed Lord when on earth,

or to what He did here. “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” (Verses 8-10)

Thus there is a twofold conviction of righteousness. The first ground is, that the only righteousness now is in Christ gone to be with the Father. So perfectly did Christ glorify God in death, as He always did in life the things that pleased His Father, that nothing short of putting Him as man at His own right hand could meet the case. Wondrous fact! a man now in glory, at the right hand of God, above all angels, principalities, and powers. This is the proof of righteousness. It is what God the Father owed to Christ, who had so perfectly pleased and so morally glorified Him, even in respect of sin. All the world, yea, all worlds, would be too little to mark His sense of value for Christ and His work — nothing less than setting Him as man at His right hand in heaven. But there is another though negative, as that was the positive, proof of righteousness — that the world has lost Christ, “and ye see me no more.” When Christ returns, He will gather His own to Himself, as in John 14. But as for the world, it has rejected and crucified Christ. The consequence is, that it will see Christ no more till He comes in judgment, and this will be to put down its pride for ever. Thus there is this double conviction of righteousness: the first is Christ gone to be with the Father on high; the second is Christ seen no more consequently. The rejected Christ is accepted and glorified in the highest seat above, which condemns the world and proves there is no righteousness in it or man; but more than this, the world shall see Him no more. When He returns, it is to judge man; but as far as concerns the offer of blessing to man in a living Christ, it is gone for ever. The Jews did and do look for Him; but

when He came, they would not have Him. The best of the world, therefore, the choicest and most divinely privileged of men, have turned out the most guilty. A living Messiah they will never see. If any have Him now, it can only be a rejected and heavenly Christ.

But there is another thing — the Spirit will convince the world "of judgment." What is the conviction of judgment? It is not the destruction of this place or that. Such was the way in which God manifested His judgment of old; but the Holy Ghost bears witness now, that the prince of this world is judged. He led the world to cast out the truth, and God Himself, in the person of Christ. His judgment is sealed. It is fixed beyond hope of change. It is only a question of the moment in God's hands, and the world with its prince will be treated according to the judgment already pronounced. "Of judgment," He says, "because the prince of this world is judged." (Verse 11) In John we have the truth, without waiting for what will be manifest. The Spirit here judges things at the roots, dealing with things according to their reality in God's sight, into which the believer enters.

Thus everywhere there is absolute opposition between the world and the Father, expressed morally when the Son was here, and proved now that the Spirit is come. The great mark of the world is that the Father is unknown. Hence, like Jews, or even heathen, they can pray to Almighty God to bless their leagues, or their arms, their crops, their herds, or what not. Thereby they flatter themselves perhaps that they may do God service; but the Father's love is unknown — never in such a condition can He be fully known. Even when we look at children of God, scattered here and there in the

waste, they are trembling and fearful, and practically at a distance, instead of consciously near in peace, as if it were God's will that His children should now stand off in Sinai — distance and terror. Who ever heard even of an earthly father, worthy of the name, so sternly repelling his children? Certainly this is not our Father as we know Him through Christ Jesus. Brethren, it is the spirit of the world which, when sanctioned, invariably tends to destroy the knowledge of the Father, and of our proper relationship, even among His real children, because it necessarily slips more or less into Judaism.

But the Holy Ghost has another work. He convinces the world of the truth they do not know, by the very fact that He is outside the world, and has nothing to do with it. He dwells with the children of God. I do not deny His power in the testimony of the gospel to souls. This is another thing not spoken of here. But, besides, we have His direct immediate action among the disciples. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (Verses 12, 13) Thus the disciples, favoured as they were, were far from knowing all that the Lord desired for them, and would have told them if their state had admitted of it. When redemption was accomplished, and Christ was raised from the dead, and the Holy Ghost was given, then they were competent to enter into all the truth, not before. Hence, Christianity awaits not only Christ's coming, but the accomplishment of His work, and also the mission and personal presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, consequent on that work. But He would take no independent place, any more than the Son had. "He shall not speak from himself; but whatever he shall hear,

he shall speak: and he will report (or announce) to you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall report it to you." (Verses 13, 14)

It is not said, as some think, that He shall not speak about Himself; for the Holy Ghost does speak, and tells us much concerning Himself and His operations; and never so much as under the Christian revelation. The fullest instruction as to the Spirit is in the New Testament; and, pray, who speaks of the Holy Ghost if it be not Himself? Was it merely Paul? or John? or any other man? The fact is, that the Authorised Version gives rather obsolete English. The meaning is, that He shall not speak of His own authority, as if He had nothing to do with the Father and the Son. For He is come here to glorify the Son, just as the Son, when here, was glorifying the Father. And this explains why, although the Holy Ghost is worthy of supreme worship, and of being, equally with the Father and the Son, personally addressed in prayer, yet, having come down for the purpose of animating, directing, and effectuating the work and worship of God's children here, He is never presented in the epistles as directly the object, but rather as the power, of Christian prayer. Therefore, we find them praying in, and never to, the Holy Ghost. At the same time, when we say "God," of course we do mean not only the Father, but the Son, and the Holy Ghost too. In that way, therefore, every intelligent believer knows that he includes the Spirit and the Son with the Father, when he addresses God; because the name "God" does not belong to one person in the Trinity more than to another. But when we speak of the persons in the Godhead distinctively, and with knowledge of what God has done and is doing, we do well to remind

ourselves and one another, that the Spirit has come down and taken a special place among and in the disciples now; the consequence of which is, that He is pleased administratively (without renouncing His personal rights) to direct our hearts thus towards God the Father and the Lord Jesus. He is thus (if we may speak so, as I believe we may and ought reverentially) serving the interests of the Father and the Son here below in the disciples. The fact we have noticed, the administrative position of the Spirit, is thus owing to the work He has voluntarily undertaken for the Father and the Son, though, of course, as a question of His own glory, He is equally to be adored with the Father and the Son, and is always comprehended in God as such.

The rest of the chapter, without entering into minute points, shows that the Lord, about to leave the disciples, would give them a taste of joy — a testimony of what will be. (Verses 16-22) The world might rejoice in having got rid of Him; but He would give His own joy, which would not be taken from them. In measure, this was made good by our Lord’s appearing after He rose from the dead; but the full force of it will only be known when He comes again.

Then there is another privilege. The Lord intimates a new character of drawing near to the Father, which they had not yet known. (Verses 23-26) Hitherto they had asked nothing in His name. “In that day,” He says, “ye shall ask me nothing.” ‘We are in “that day” now. “In that day” does not mean in a future day, but in one that is come, Instead of using Christ’s intervention as Martha proposed, instead of begging Christ to ask11 the Father, demanding each thing they needed of Christ Himself, they might reckon on the Father’s giving them

whatsoever they should ask Him in Christ's name. It is not a question of a Messianic link to get what they wanted, but they would be able to ask the Father in His name themselves. How blessed to know the Father thus hearkening to the children asking in the Son's name! It is of children on earth now the Lord speaks, not of the Father's house by-and-by. Evidently this is a capital truth, bearing powerfully on the nature of the Christian's prayers, as well as on his worship.

It is exactly what accounts for the fact, that we are here on ground quite different from that of the precious and blessed form of prayer which the Lord gave His disciples when they wanted to know how to pray, as John taught his disciples. The Lord necessarily gave them that which was suited to their then condition. Now, I believe, it is little to say that there is not, nor ever was, a formula of prayer comparable with the Lord's prayer. Nor is there, to my thinking, a single petition of that prayer which is not a model for the prayers of His followers ever since; but all remains true and applicable at all times — at least, till our Father's kingdom come. Why, then, was it not employed formally by the apostolic Church? The answer lies in what is now before us. Our Lord here, at the end of His earthly course, informs the disciples that hitherto they had demanded nothing in His name. They had, no doubt, been using the Lord's prayer for some time; nevertheless they had asked nothing in His name. In that day they were to ask the Father in His name. What I gather from this is, that those who had even used the Lord's prayer, as the disciples had done up to this time, did not know what it was to ask the Father in the Lord's name. They still continued at a comparative distance from their Father; but this is not the Christian

state. By the Christian state I mean that in which a man is conscious of his nearness to his God and Father, and able to draw near in virtue of the Holy Ghost even. On the contrary, prayers that suppose a person to be an object of divine displeasure, anxious, and doubtful whether he is to be saved or not — such an experience supposes one incapable of speaking to the Father in Christ's name. It is speaking as still tied and bound with the chain of their sins, instead of standing in known reconciliation, and, with the Spirit of adoption, drawing near to the Father in the name of Christ. Who can honestly, or at least intelligently, deny it? Thus, whatever the blessing through the Lord's ministry, there was certainly an advance here foreshown, founded on redemption, resurrection, and the Spirit given. Why should men limit their thoughts, so as to ignore that incomparable blessing to which even in this gospel Christ was ever pointing, as the fruit of His death and of the presence of the Comforter who would bring in "that day"? It was impossible to furnish a prayer which could reconcile the wants of souls before and after the work of the cross, and the new place consequent on it. And, in fact, the Lord has done the contrary; for He gave the disciples a prayer on principles of everlasting truth, but not anticipating that which His death and resurrection brought to view. Of these new privileges the Holy Ghost sent down was to be the power. Be assured this is no secondary matter, and that traditional views slight unwittingly the infinite efficacy and value of what Christ has wrought, the results of which the Holy Ghost was sent down to apply to our souls. And the gift of that divine person to dwell in us — is this, too, a secondary matter? or is there no radical change which accompanies the work of Christ when accomplished and

known? If, indeed, everything be secondary to the supply of man's need, if the unfolding of God's glory and ways in Christ be comparatively a cipher, I understand as much as I hate a principle so base and unbelieving.

It appears to me that the Lord Jesus Himself clearly sets forth the new thing at the highest value, which no general reasonings of men ought to weaken in the least. That immense change, then, let us accept on His authority who cannot deceive us, assured that our brethren, who fail to see how full association with the efficacy of His work and the acceptance of His person, made good in the presence of the Spirit, accounts for the difference between prayer before and prayer after, put no intentional slight on His words in this chapter, or on His work of atonement. But I beseech them to consider whether they are not allowing habits and prejudices to blind them to what seems to me the mind of Christ in this grave question.

In the close of John 16:25-33, the Lord puts, with perfect plainness, both their coming position in His name, and as immediate objects of the Father's affection, and His own place as coming from and going to the Father, above all promise and dispensation. This the disciples thought they saw distinctly; but they were mistaken: their words do not rise higher than — "We believe that thou camest forth from God." The Master thereon warns them of that hour, even then come in spirit, when His rejection should prove their dispersion — deserted, yet not alone, "because the Father is with me." He spoke, that in Him they might have peace, as in the world they should have tribulation. "But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." It was an enemy of the Father and of them, but an enemy overcome of Him.

On John 17 I must be brief, though its treasures might well invite one to devote ample space to weigh them. A few words, however, may perhaps give the general outline. The Lord, lifting up His eyes to heaven, no longer speaks to the disciples, but turns to His Father. He lays a double ground before Him: one, the glory of His person; the other, the accomplishment of His work. He seeks from the Father for His disciples a place of blessing in association with Himself suitable both to His person and work.

Be it observed, that from verse 6 He develops the relationship of the disciples with His Father, having manifested the Father's name to those who were the Father's, and given them the words which the Father gave Him, and spoken as He did now that they might have His joy fulfilled in them. From verse 14 He develops it with the world, they being not of it, and wholly sanctified from it, while sent into it like Himself. And observe, here, that He has given them the Father's word (λόγον) for their testimony (as before His words, ῥήματα), but sanctifies them, not by this only, which kept them from the evil of the world, but by Himself, always separate from sin, but now made higher than the heavens, so as to fill them with an object there that could engage and expand and purify their affections. From verse 20 He extends this place of privilege and responsibility to those who should believe on Him through the word of the apostles, the moral unity of verse 11 being now enlarged into a unity of testimony, that the world might believe that the Father sent the Son; and carried onward, even to the display of glory — "I in them, and thou in me" — when they shall be perfected into one, and the world shall know (not then

“believe”) that the Father sent the Son, and loved them as He loved Him. (Compare 2 Thess. 1:10)

Lastly, from verse 24 to the end, we have, if possible, deeper things than even these; and here the Lord expresses His heart’s desire, for it is no longer, as before, in the form of a request (ἐρωτῶ) but, “Father, I will,” or desire (

θέλω). This word indicates a new character of plea: “I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” The earlier section laid His person and His work as the ground for His being glorified on high, according to the title of the one, and in the accomplishment of the other. Verse 24, as it were, takes up that position of glory with the Father before the world was, into which Christ has gone, with His heart’s expression of desire that they should be with Him where He is, that they might behold His glory, which the Father gave Him; “for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Thus, if the central portion gave us the disciples on the earth in relation with the Father on the one hand, and in total separation from the world on the other, with subsequent believers brought into one, both in testimony and in glory by-and-by before the world, the closing verses take up Christians, as it were, with the Father in an unearthly, heavenly glory, and His desire that they should be with Him there. It is not merely sought for them, that they should be thoroughly, as far as, could be, in His own place of relationship with the Father, and apart from the world, but also that they should be brought into intimacy of nearness with Himself before the Father. Then, in verse 25, the breach between the world and the Father and the Son being complete, He says, “O righteous Father, the world hath

not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." There is always this opposition between the Father and the world, proved by His person in the world. But the disciples had known that the Father sent the Son, as the Son knew the Father. He had made known to them the Father's name, and would yet more, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them;" this last verse bringing into them, as it were, the Father's love, as the Son knew it, which was the secret source of all the blessing and glory, and Christ Himself in them, whose life by the Spirit was the sole nature capable of enjoying all. Thus they should have a present enjoyment of the Father, and of Christ, according to the place of nearness they had as thus associated with Him.

On the concluding chapters of our gospel I cannot speak particularly now. Yet I must, in passing point out that even in these solemn closing scenes the glory of the Son's person is ever the prominent figure. Hence we have no notice of His agony in the garden, nor of God's forsaking Him on the tree. Matthew depicts Him as the suffering Messiah, according to psalms and prophets; Mark, as the rejected Servant and Prophet of God; Luke, as the perfect and obedient Son of man, who shrank from no trial either for soul or body, but even on the cross prayed for His enemies, filling a poor sinner's heart with the good news of salvation, and committing His spirit with unwavering confidence to His Father. The point here is the Son of God with the world, the Jews especially being His enemies. Hence, John tells us (John 18) what no other gospel does, that when the band came to take Jesus, led by one who knew too well the spot where His heart had so often, poured itself out to the

Father, at once they went backward, and fell to the ground. Do you suppose Matthew let it slip? or that Mark and Luke never heard of it? Is it conceivable that a fact so notorious — the very world being the objects of the divine power that cast them prostrate to the ground — could be hidden from, or forgotten by, friends or foes? Or if even men (not to speak of the Spirit's power) would forget such a thing, did the rest think it too slight for their mention? All such suppositions are preposterous. The true explanation is, that the gospels are written with divine design, and that here, as everywhere, John records a fact which falls in with the Spirit's object in his gospel. Did these men come to seize Jesus? He was going to be a prisoner, and to die; in the one case, as much as in the other, He would prove it was not of man's constraint, but of His own will and in obedience to His Father's. He was a willing prisoner, and a willing victim. If none could take His life unless He laid it down, so none could take Him prisoner unless He gave Himself up. Nor was it simply that He could ask His Father for twelve legions of angels, as He says in Matthew; but, in John, did He want angels? They might and did ascend and descend on Him as Son of man; but He had only to speak, and it was done. He is God.

The moment He said, "I am he," without lifting a finger, or even audibly expressing a desire, they fell to the ground. Could this scene be suitably given by any other than John? Could he leave it out who presents his Master as the Son and the Word who was God?

Again, we have our Lord's calm rebuke to Peter, who had cut off the ear of Malchus. Let Luke alone tell us of the Lord's gracious healing (for Jehovah's power to heal was not absent); John alone adds, "The cup which my

Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He preserves throughout His personal dignity and His conscious relationship, but withal in perfect submission to His Father.

Then follows the notice of Peter's sad history with that other disciple which was known to the high priest. Next, our Lord is before the high priest, Caiaphas, as previously before his father-in-law Annas, and, finally, before Pilate. Suffice it to say, that the one point which meets us here, as distinct from the other gospels, is His person. Not that He was not King of the Jews, but His kingdom is not of this world, not from hence, and He Himself is born and come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Here it is the Jews insist He ought by their law to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. (John 19) Here, too, He answers Pilate, after scourging and mockery, "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." (Verse 11) It was the Jews, led on by Judas, that had this greater sin. The Jew ought to have known better than Pilate, and Judas better than the Jew. The glory of the Son was too bright for their eyes. Afterwards there is another characteristic scene, the blending of the most perfect human affection with His divine glory — He confides His mother to the disciple whom He loved. (Verses 25-27)

The gospel which most of all shows Him to be God is careful to prove Him man. The Word was made flesh.

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." I know not a more sweet and wonderful proof

of how completely He was divinely superior to all circumstances. He had before Him with perfect distinctness all the truth of God. Here was a scripture which He remembers as unaccomplished. It was a word in Psalm 69. It was enough. “I thirst.” What absorption in His Father’s will! “Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.” (Verses 29, 30) Where could such a word as this be but in John? Who could say, “It is finished,” except Jesus in John? Matthew and Mark both give our Lord saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This could not be in John. Luke gives us, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” because there the perfect man never abandons His perfect reliance on God. God must, in the judgment of our sins, forsake Him, but He would never forsake God. The atonement would not have been what it is unless God had thus forsaken Him. But in Luke it is the sign of absolute trust in His Father, and not God’s abandonment. In John He says, “It is finished,” because He is the Son, by whom all worlds were made, Who but He could say it? Who but John could mention that He delivered up (παρέδωκε) His spirit? In every point of difference the fullest possible proof of divine glory and wisdom appears in these gospels. Put to death no doubt He was but at the same time it was His own voluntary will; and who could have this about death itself but a divine person? In a mere man it would be sin; in Him it was perfection. Then come the soldiers, breaking the legs of the others crucified with Him; but finding Jesus dead already, one pierces His side, land forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bare record.”

Thus a double scripture is fulfilled. The apostle John does not quote many scriptures; but when he does, the person of the Son is the great point. Accordingly this was the case now; for not a bone was to be broken. It was true. Nevertheless, He was to be pierced. He was singled out from the others, even while dead between the dying thieves. He has a place even here that belonged to Him alone.

Joseph charges himself with the body too; and Nicodemus, who came first by night is here by day, honoured by association with Jesus crucified, of whom he had been ashamed once, spite of the miracles He was doing.

In John 20 is the resurrection, and this in a remarkable light. No such outward circumstance is here as in Matthew, no soldiers trembling, no walk with disciples, but as ever the person of God's Son, though disciples prove how little they entered into the truth. Peter "saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead." (Verses 8, 9) It was evidence; and there is no moral value in accepting on evidence. Believing the word of God has moral value, because it gives God credit for truth. A man gives up himself to confide in God. Believing the Scriptures, therefore, has another character altogether from a judgment formed on a matter of fact. Mary Magdalene, with as little understanding of the Scriptures as they, stood without at the sepulchre weeping, when they went to their own homes. Jesus meets her in her sorrow, dries her tears, and sends her to the disciples with a message of His resurrection. But He does not permit her to touch Him. In Matthew the other women even retain Him by the feet. Why? The reason appears to be that in the

earlier gospel it is the pledge of a bodily presence for the Jews in the latter day; for whatever be the consequences of Jewish unbelief now, God is faithful. The gospel of John has here no purpose of showing God's promises for the circumcision; but, on the contrary, sedulously detaches the disciples from Jewish thoughts. Mary Magdalene is a sample or type of this. The heart must be taken off His bodily presence. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." The Christian owns Christ in heaven. As the apostle says, even if we had known Christ after the flesh, "henceforth know we him no more." The cross, as we know it, closes all connection with even Him in this world. It is the same Christ manifested in life here upon earth. John shows us, in Mary Magdalene contrasted with the woman of Galilee, the difference between the Christian and the Jew. It is not outward corporeal presence on earth, but a greater nearness, though He is ascended to heaven, because of the power of the Holy Ghost. "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (Verse 17) Never had He put Himself and His disciples so together before.

The next scene (verses 19-23) is the disciples gathered together. It is not a message individually, but they are assembled on the same first day at evening, and Jesus stands, spite of closed doors, in the midst of them, and showed them His hands and His side. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain,

they are retained.” It is a picture of the assembly that was about to be formed at Pentecost — and this is the assembly’s function. They have authority from God to retain or to remit sins — not at all as a question of eternal forgiveness, but administratively or in discipline. For instance, when a soul is received from the world, what is this but remitting sins? The Church again, by restoring a soul put outside, puts its seal, as it were, to the truth of what God has done, acts upon it, and thus remits the sin. On the other hand, supposing a person is refused fellowship, or is put away after being received, there is the retaining of sins. There is no real difficulty, if men did not pervert Scripture into a means of self-exaltation, or cast away truth, on the other side, revolting from the frightful misuse known in popery. But Protestants have failed to keep up consciously the possession of so great a privilege, founded on the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Eight days after we have another scene. (Verses 24-29) One of the disciples, Thomas, had not been with the others when Jesus had thus appeared. Clearly there is a special teaching in this. Seven days had run their course before Thomas was with the disciples, when the Lord Jesus Christ meets his unbelief, pronouncing those more blessed who saw not, and yet believed. Of what is this the symbol? Of Christian faith,? The very contrary. Christian faith is essentially believing on Him that we have not seen: believing, “we walk by faith, not by sight.” But the day is coming when there will be the knowledge and the sight of glory in the earth. So the millennium will differ from what is now. I deny not that there will be faith, as there was faith required when Messiah was on earth. Then faith saw underneath the

veil of flesh this deeper glory. But, evidently, proper Christianity is after redemption was wrought, and Christ takes His place on high, and the Holy Ghost is sent down, when there is nothing but faith. Thomas, then, represents the slow mind of unbelieving Israel, seeing the Lord after the present cycle of time is completely over. What makes it the more remarkable is the contrast with Mary Magdalene in the previous verses, who is the type of the Christian taken out of Judaism, and no longer admitted to Jewish contact with the Messiah, but witnesses of Him in ascension.

Mark, too, the confession of Thomas; not a word about "My Father and your Father," but, "My Lord, and my God." Just so the Jew will acknowledge Jesus. They shall look on Him whom they pierced, and own Jesus of Nazareth to be their Lord and their God. (See Zechariah 12) It is not association with Christ, and He not ashamed to call us brethren, according to the position He has taken as man before His and our God and Father, but the recognition forced on Him by the marks of the cross, which drew out the confession of Christ's divine glory and Lordship.

In John 21, the appended scene is the fishing. After a night of failure, a vast multitude of fish is taken in the net, without breaking it or risking the ships (Luke 5), or the need of gathering the good into vessels and of casting the bad away. (Matt. 13) This I conceive to be a gathering in from the Gentiles. The sea is continually used in contrast to the land in prophetic Scripture. Thus, if the last was the Jewish scene when the Church state closed, this is the figure of the Gentiles in the great day of the earth's jubilee, the age to come contrasted with this age. From verse 15 to the end is the deep personal

dealing of our Lord with Peter; also John's place. As I have no doubt there is a significance typically in what we have just glanced at, so it appears to me with regard to this also. The intermediate ministry of Paul is, of course, not here noticed; for he was the witness of Christ glorified in heaven — Head of the Church His body, wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile. To Peter, the Lord, thoroughly restoring his soul after proving him to the core, commits His sheep and lambs (His Jewish flock, as we know from elsewhere). A violent end comes, though to God's glory. But if the full heavenly testimony is left for its own due place in Paul's completing the word of God — that hidden mystery, John is seen witnessing in principle to the end. (Compare verses 22, 23 with the Revelation) However, I do not enlarge here, but rather apologise for the time that I have occupied in going over so large an extent of God's word. I pray the Lord that even these suggestions may be blessed of God in stirring up fresh desire to study, and weigh, and pray over these precious gospels. Surely it will be sweet reward now, if God deign thereby to give some of His children to approach His word with more reverence and a more childlike trust in every word He has written. May He vouchsafe this through Christ our Lord.

1 * I cannot but regard John 1:2 as a striking and complete setting aside of the Alexandrian and Patristic distinction of λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός. Some of the earlier Greek fathers, who were infected with Platonism, held that the λόγος was conceived in God's mind from eternity, and only uttered, as it were, in time. This has given a handle to Arians, who, like other unbelievers, greedily seek the traditions of men. The

apostle here asserts, in the Holy Ghost, the eternal personality of the Word with God.

2 *I cannot but think that this is the true version, and exhibits the intended aim of the clause. Most of the early writers took it as the authorized version, save Theodore of Mopsuestia, who 3 * The best text omits other expressions, evidently derived from verses 15, 30.

4 * The suspicion that some weak believers or enemies of the faith omitted the section, as the Bishop of Hippo suggests, would expose the passage to be tampered with. It is very likely that the Christians who read the Shepherd of Hermas in their public services would omit John 8:1-11. Similar unbelief inclines critical judgment in that direction now. Judgment of facts is apt to be swayed and formed by the will.

5 * It is the remark of a critic unfriendly to the passage, that this question belongs to the last days of our Lord’s ministry, and cannot well be introduced chronologically here. Unconsciously, however, this is really a strong confirmation; for morally John starts with the rejection of Jesus, and gives at the beginning even (as in the cleansing of the temple) similar truths to those which the rest attest at the close.

6 *The fact that

κατακρίνω is found here twice, and here only in John, is of no weight against the genuineness of the passage. It is the strict judicial term for passing an adverse sentence among men. How, where, could this be anywhere else in John? It is not true that κρίνω is ever used in this sense anywhere in John. It means, and should always be rendered, “judge,” not “condemn,”

though the effect for the guilty (and man is guilty) be necessarily condemnation.

7 Among the detailed objections to the genuineness of the passage (John 7:53 - 8:11), it is contended that the evidence of Augustine and Nicon (who distinctly tell us that it was expunged wilfully on account of the supposed license it gave to sin) does not account for the omission of John 7:53. But this is short-sighted. For the going of each to his home is in evident connection with, and contra-distinction to, the going of Jesus to the mount of Olives. He was ever the stranger here. And what gospel, or whose style, does this simple but profound contrast suit so much as John? (Compare John 20:10, 11) We know, from John 18:2, that this neighbourhood was the frequent resort of Jesus with His disciples.

8 *"They were struck by the power of the word of Christ," says an opponent of the claim of the commencing section to a genuine and divinely given place in the chapter, unconscious that he is thereby illustrating its connection with the whole current of the chapter.

9 * I apprehend that by "my day" He means the day of Christ's glory; not vaguely the time of Christ, but the day when He will be displayed in glory. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day." He looked for that day of Christ's appearing in glory, and he "saw it, and was glad." It was the day when the promises would be accomplished, and very naturally he who had the promises looked for the time when they are to be made good in Christ.

10 * It is difficult to say why Tyndale, Cranmer, the Geneva, and the Authorised Versions give the plural

form, which has no authority whatever. Wiclif and the Rhemish, adhering to the Vulgate, happen to be right. His word has a unity of character which is of moment. He that loves Christ keeps His word; he that does not love Him keeps not His words; if he observes some of them only, other motives may operate; but if he loved Christ, he would value His word as a whole.

11 *It is remarkable that Martha puts a word (

αἰτήσῃ) into Christ's mouth (that is, uses an expression for asking the Father), which is never used nor warranted by Himself. It makes the Lord a mere petitioner, lowering the glory of His person, and obscuring, if not denying, the intimacy of His relationship with the Father.